

Probation

Probation Officer Burnout: An Organizational Disease/An Organizational Cure *Paul W. Brown*

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Probation Centers as a Management Promotion Tool *William V. Pelfrey*

Guidelines: To Be or Not To Be *Chris W. Eskridge*

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This Issue in Brief

Probation Officer Burnout: An Organizational Disease/An Organizational Cure.—In recent years, considerable attention has been given to burnout of public service personnel; however, little has been published on burnout of probation officers. Author Paul W. Brown looks at organizationally caused burnout and some approaches to moderate it. According to the author, most correctional agencies are based on a military-like structure, and probation departments seem to be no exception. This traditional structure may be responsible for burnout, and there is little a probation officer can do about it. Changes will have to be made by managers who are willing to accept and implement more democratic management styles.

The Privatization of Treatment: Prison Reform in the 1980's.—According to author Francis T. Cullen, a contributing factor to the swing in criminal justice policy to the right has been the failure of progressives to provide plausible policy alternatives. He argues that a viable avenue of prison reform is the privatization of correctional treatment programs—a reform that is politically feasible because it capitalizes upon both the continuing legitimacy of the rehabilitative ideal and the emerging popularity of private sector involvement in corrections. While a number of concerns about profit-making in prisons must be addressed, the author contends, the major advantage of privatizing treatment is that it severs the potentially corrupting link between custody and treatment and thus helps to structure interests within the prison in favor of effective correctional rehabilitation.

A Theoretical Examination of Home Incarceration.—Developing a theoretical rationale for the use of home incarceration as an alternative sentence, authors Richard A. Ball and J. Robert Lilly argue, based on a previously developed theoretical position as to the goals of sentencing generally, that “punishment” is ultimately directed at the restricted reprobation of an act in such a way as to provide for the reparation of that particular conception of social reality agreed upon in a given society. According to the authors, home incarceration has advan-

tages in that it is of easy communicability in terms of present conceptions of social reality, of limited complexity and fairly obvious potential impact, and of reasonable cost. Since it is also characterized by reversibility, divisibility, compatibility, and perceived relevance to organizational goals, it is considered to possess the theoretical advantages necessary to adoption.

Probation Supervision: Mission Impossible.—According to author John Rosecrance, there is a consensus that probation has failed to reduce recidivism and has lost credibility with the public and other criminal justice

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agencies. Probation supervision has proven ineffective, he contends, because of bureaucratic dynamics and the conflicting nature of officer-client relationships. Although there are calls for drastically overhauling probation services and revitalizing its mission, the prevailing alternatives—(1) service orientation, (2) differential supervision, and (3) intensive supervision—are incremental and fail to address fundamental problems. The author advocates eliminating probation supervision and allowing other agencies to assume these responsibilities. Probation would be left with a feasible and unambiguous mission—providing objective investigation services to the court.

The Dimensions of Crime.—Author Manuel Lopez-Rey discusses a subject addressed at the seventh United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime, Milan, 1985: What are the dimensions of crime? Contending that criminal justice policy is formulated without knowledge of the true scope of crime worldwide, the author holds that what is thought of as constituting crime is only common, conventional crime, and what is not taken into account is unconventional crime—such as terrorism, torture, and summary execution—prevalent in dictatorial regimes where crime often goes unreported. The author addresses how malfunctions in the criminal justice system affect the dimensions of crime, stressing the need to define what is crime by law and to broaden conceptions of crime to include less conventional crime. Influencing factors such as economic crime and criminal negligence are also discussed.

Security and Custody: Monitoring the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Classification System.—Authors Michael Janus, Jerome Mabli, and J. D. Williams report on the Federal Bureau of Prisons' system—implemented in 1979—for assigning inmates to institutions (Security Designation) and to various levels of supervision (Custody Classification) within institutions based on background and behavioral variables. This security and custody system replaced an informal one which relied heavily on individual discretion. The new method quantified the factors involved in decisionmaking and shifted the focus of classification procedures from the diagnostic-medical model to the humane control model. Since 1981, the Bureau of Prisons has monitored the system by recording monthly security and custody breakdowns as well as inmate misconduct and escape information for each of its approximately 50 institutions. This study will report analysis of these data both cross-sectionally and longitudinally at the institution level.

Repeating the Cycle of Hard Living and Crime: Wives' Accommodations to Husbands' Parole Performance.—Author Laura T. Fishman examines the social ac-

commodations made by prisoners' wives to their husbands' post-prison performance. To construct an ethnographic account of the social worlds of 30 women married to men incarcerated in two prisons, the author employed a combination of methods—indepth interviews with wives, examination of prison records, summaries of women's "rap sessions," and a variety of other sources of data. She found that of the 30 women, 15 welcomed their husbands home from prison, and the wives used a variety of accommodative strategies to support their husbands' settling down and to deter them from resuming hard living patterns and criminal activities. The author concluded that none of these strategies were as effective as wives anticipated; wives do not appear to have much influence on whether or not their paroled husbands resume criminal activities, get rearrested, and return to jail.

Community Service Sentencing in New Zealand: A Survey of Users.—Beginning in 1981, New Zealand law authorized sentencing offenders to perform from 8 to 200 hours of unpaid service to a charitable or governmental organization. Authors Julie Leibrich, Burt Galaway, and Yvonne Underhill conducted structured interviews with samples of probation officers, community service sponsors, offenders sentenced to community service, and judges to determine the extent of agreement on the purpose of the sentence, ways in which the sentence was being implemented, benefits thought to flow from the sentence, and the extent of satisfaction with the sentence. According to the authors, the New Zealand experience suggests that community service is a feasible and practical sentencing option. They caution, however, that consistency of administration requires reaching agreement as to the purpose of the sentence and its relationship with other sentences. A number of implementation decisions also need to be resolved, including the role of the offender in selecting a community service sponsor, the role of the judge and probation officer in determining a specific placement, development of working relationships between probation officer and community service sponsor, and the need for a backup sanction.

Assessment Centers as a Management Promotion Tool.—An assessment center or the multiple assessment approach is the careful analysis and programmed assessment of management ability using a variety of job-related criteria. This approach has been used for decades in companies such as IBM, General Electric, American Telephone and Telegraph, and numerous government agencies. The variables or dimensions used to test an applicant's attributes vary from organization to organization, as do the techniques used to test these dimensions. Author William V. Pelfrey reviews the typical techniques

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Repeating the Cycle of Hard Living and Crime: Wives' Accommodations to Husbands' Parole Performance

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Background

AFTER MONTHS of planning and dreaming, many prisoners and their wives are reunited. Although such reunions can be joyful, there are often problems and dilemmas associated with them. This article explores how prisoners' wives experience their husbands' transitions from prisoner to civilian status. Of primary concern are the difficulties encountered by wives 1) in attempting to establish the kinds of marriages they had planned during their husbands' imprisonment and 2) in attempting to support their husbands' reintegration into family life.

There is, in the literature, virtually no discussion of the impact of parole on the wives of former prisoners. However, released prisoners' perceptions of domestic and family life have been examined (Erickson, et al., 1973; Irwin, 1970; Morris, et al., 1975; Studt, 1967). These studies have consistently shown a strong positive relationship between parole success and the maintenance of family ties while in prison. This finding has held up across diverse populations of offenders (Ohlin, 1954) and in very different locales. Similar findings have been reported more recently by Erickson, et al. (1973), Glaser (1969), Holt and Muller (1972), and Irwin (1970).

Irwin (1970) specifically looked at how returning prisoners perceived domestic life, and his findings provide a possible explanation for the relationship between parole success and strong family ties. He points out that the types of support, both practical and relational, provided by families have implications for the kinds of adjustments prisoners make to their status as parolees. Specifically, families can act to buffer newly released parolees from immediate problems by providing economic, material, and social support. With this help, parolees show a better chance of succeeding on parole.

The literature also suggests that factors operating in the family setting can exacerbate parolees' problems. In his classic study, Glaser (1969) argues that "the absence or presence of conflict within the family, conflict between the parolee and his family, the compatibility of the parolee's and the family's commitments, the total character of the family's and parolee's past history together will have an important bearing on the solution

of problems. . . In many instances, the family may be the major force driving the men back into systematic deviance." (Glaser, 1969, p. 245) Specific evidence indicates that post-prison success is explicitly related to discord with wives. Oddly, there is no extensive description of how wives perceive their husbands' post-prison performance.

The present article suggests that whether or not released prisoners establish conventionally oriented lives, their wives have their own personal reactions to the necessity of continuing to play a supportive role in their husbands' reintegration into the family. One significant dimension of this process is the range of accommodative strategies that wives employ to support their husbands' settling down and to deter them from resuming hard living patterns and criminal activities.

Although this research addresses a relatively unexplored area, a number of closely related bodies of work provide an understanding of 1) the ways in which lifestyles act as a form of accommodation to change and 2) how coping strategies adopted by wives are used in making relations with husbands more bearable.

From wives' accounts, we learn that accommodations are made within the context of their particular social milieu. Prisoners' wives are not only responding to social control agents, but also to the stresses and strains which stem from their sociocultural backgrounds. Hence, they are likely to draw upon culturally specific notions in determining what they consider to be the most effective accommodations. The majority of prisoners' wives are from the working class. The kinds of accommodations they make to intermittent poverty as well as to male criminality are ones suggested by working class environments.

Howell (1973) has developed a relevant typology of working class lifestyles in which he distinguishes between "hard living" and "settled living" patterns. "Hard living," he says, is evidenced by several characteristics: 1) a preoccupation with the problems and drama of day-to-day life, particularly with personal relationships; 2) chaotic work histories, in which families experience recurrent employment and unemployment; 3) marital instability, in which family members have had at least one previous marriage and an unsteady current marriage; 4) general rootlessness, in that families rent their homes and tend to move frequently; 5) toughness, in which hard

livers tend to use an abundance of profanity, talk about violence, and generally act tough; and 6) heavy drinking. In contrast, "settled living" families tend to be more conventional and moderate in their approach to life with lifestyles characterized by: 1) long and stable marriages; 2) a general sense of rootedness to their communities; 3) cautiousness and conservatism; 4) moderate drinking; 5) generally steady employment among men, domestic orientation among women and; 6) a feeling of being "respectable" members of their communities and a concern with others' opinions.

Some prisoners and their wives, of course, are drawn from the middle class. Hence, Irwin's (1970) archetype of middle class lifestyles, the "square john," is also relevant here. Based on Irwin's discussion, I have created a female counterpart, the "square jane," whose lifestyle is indexed by: 1) steady employment in white collar and/or skilled blue collar occupations; 2) strong ties to her community; 3) stable family life; 4) a position as an "upstanding" citizen; 5) the acquisition of the recognized symbols of middle class status; 6) moderate consumption of drugs and/or alcohol; and 7) participation in a middle class "round of life." These typologies provide a useful starting point for discussions of the overall styles of accommodations wives and their paroled husbands adopt.

Beyond this focus on lifestyles, there has been relevant work on wives' reactions to husbands who are mentally ill, alcoholics, gamblers, or batterers. An important finding emerges from Jackson's (1962) work on family reactions to alcoholism, Yarrow, et al.'s (1955) studies of wives' responses to mental illness, Walker's (1979) work on wives' responses to battering, and Leiseur's (1977) research on wives' reactions to gambling: There is often a sequence of changes in the kinds of coping strategies families employ to deal with a member's difficulties. New accommodations are likely to occur as situations change or as family members' behavior changes.

A similar pattern emerges in the case of prisoners' wives, who often devise a range of strategies to aid in maintaining the outward appearance of smooth relationships with their husbands. Few of these patterns of accommodation are, however, permanent: They are usually modified in the course of wives' ongoing interactions with their husbands.

The accommodation literature has contributed in important ways to the present research. It provides a rich source of insights into the strategies and coping mechanisms that prisoners' wives use in coming to grips with crime and parole and making their lives more bearable. Work on lifestyles, such as Howell's (1973), has sensitized us to the ultimate dependence of forms of ac-

commodation on subcultural and cultural patterns drawn from the larger society.

The present study, a focused examination of wives' reactions to their husbands' post-prison performance, shows how forms of accommodation are contingent, in certain respects, on the subcultures out of which prisoners' wives are drawn and on the forms of interaction between husbands and their wives.

In the following discussion of types of reorganization couples undertake and the major problems and dilemmas wives encounter in reorganizing their families, specific attention is given to the wives' perceptions of two kinds of marital patterns which their paroled husbands may establish: hard living and settled living. We then examine the ways in which wives search for accommodative strategies as well as the extent to which these strategies are effective in assisting wives to preserve their marriages, deter male criminality, or support their husbands.

The study of the ways in which wives cope with their paroled husbands' resumption of some criminal and hard living patterns is part of a larger attempt to integrate what we have learned from the growing body of research on lifestyles with our more specific knowledge of crime and parole. In this sense, the discussion of patterns of accommodation among prisoners' wives is related to the larger problem of understanding concretely how individuals go about integrating diverse social worlds.

Method

The present study is best considered as an ethnography of wives' responses and accommodations to their husbands' parole performance. It is based on material gathered about the lives of 30 northern New England women who: 1) had lived in common-law or as legally married with their men for at least 6 months before the latter were arrested; 2) were connected with men who had served at least 6 months in prison; and 3) whose husbands had been incarcerated in either of two state correctional facilities—Londonderry Correctional Facility, a traditional medium security prison, and Newport Community Correctional Center, a community-based prison. Both are located in northern New England.

A complete population listing on prisoners' wives does not exist. All prison records of both facilities were reviewed in order to define a population of "married men" who were currently incarcerated in these two facilities. This led to an identification of 42 male prisoners held at the Londonderry facility and 27 at the Newport facility who met the above definition of "married" at the time they were convicted and sentenced. Interviews were held with each of the identified prisoners, and 65 prisoners

signed an agreement to participate in this study and provided me with their wives' names and addresses.

At this point, I began the process of contacting the wives. I initially did this by telephone. Of the 65 I tried to contact in this fashion, I could not locate 14. Some wives were extremely difficult to trace since they moved frequently. Five additional wives made appointments to be interviewed, but were not home at the designated time. I persisted three times and then considered these wives to be "non-contacts" as well.

The wives who were the most difficult to contact were frequently what I have termed "hard livers." Some were heavily involved in the drug subculture and a few had criminal records themselves. Seven non-contacts had left the state. I made only one attempt to contact one of these. Five wives refused to cooperate, largely due to the emotional stress dredging up unpleasant memories would entail.

The final study population, therefore, consisted of 30 white women who agreed to be interviewed. Twenty-six resided in urban or suburban areas while four prisoners' wives lived in more rural areas. The socioeconomic status of the majority of the wives could be considered working class and lower class. Only five could be considered middle class. Most were wives of prisoners serving short sentences—on average, between 6 months and a year. The bulk of these sentences were for alcohol-related petty property crimes. Few men had been convicted of crimes of violence, possession of heroin, or other more serious offenses.

The methodology of this study is based on the tradition of "grounded theory" articulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). No pretense of statistical representativeness is intended. In-depth interviews were spread over at least a minimum of two sessions during a 24-month period to ascertain the respondents' subjective perceptions and assessment of their marriages and of their experiences with arrest and imprisonment of their husbands and, lastly, of their experiences with their husbands' release from prison.¹ The interviews ranged in length from roughly 3 hours to as many as 10 hours.² In addition to the in-depth interviews, I have relied on such sources of data as prison records, summaries of meetings

¹ Most interviews were conducted in wives' homes. During each interview, I was able to take notes without apparently disturbing the wives. Since a voice printout can be a valid source of identification, I decided not to use a tape recorder. My decision to hand record was thus based on the assessment that the wives are likely to be more candid than if a tape recorder were used.

² There was considerable variation in the number of sessions. Thirteen women were interviewed from three to as many as seven times; 12 wives were interviewed twice and 5 only once. Three factors appear to have determined the frequency and duration of interview: the willingness of wives to share aspects of their lives with me; how close they lived to the research base; and whether or not they were hospitalized during the research period.

³ The term "old timers" refers to those wives who have experienced enforced separation more than once. "Neophytes" are those wives who were experiencing enforced separation for the first time.

with small groups of prisoners' wives, and notes on telephone conversations with the wives.

Information from all of these data sources has been subjected to rigorous comparisons, cross-checking, and validation with respect to the experiential frame and lifespace of the prisoners' wives, themselves. In doing this, I have followed the "constant comparative" method of analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This method involves juxtaposing categories of data and searching for similarities and differences. In this fashion, "old timers"³ have been compared to "first timers," wives with children to wives without children, "hard livers" to "settled" wives and "square janes," divorced wives to those who retained their marital ties, and wives of property offenders to wives of personal offenders. Other comparisons also have been made along a variety of dimensions.

In creating an overall image or representation of the reality depicted in the data, more or less finely cut categories and subcategories were rearranged so as to assemble together material relevant to each topic. New patterns appeared and older ones disappeared in the process of determining the final array. Thus, much of the analysis of how prisoners' wives accommodate their husbands' post-prison performance which is presented in the pages which follow is a product of the continual refinement and reformulation of a series of themes and comparisons implicit in the categories and subcategories.

Patterns of Reorganization

There are certain things that you're not going to like about your man when he comes home from the joint. Accept it. I expected a storybook ending. I expected that I would have a Prince Charming with a 9 to 5 job and he'd leave in the morning with his lunch box and then he'd come home every night. I expected he'd be like that once he left the joint. What a complete asshole I was. I'd do it again though. - An Old Timer

Prisoners' returns to their wives are often dramatic. Of 29 men, 15 left prison for their homes and families. The time had come for couples to put into practice the plans made during the months of enforced separation.

Prisoners' wives generally have mixed feelings about their husbands' release from prison. First, they look forward to their husbands' return with eagerness. They are initially optimistic about the chances that their husbands will stay out of trouble. Second, they believe that their husbands are going to fulfill their promises made during imprisonment: to establish law-abiding lifestyles so that the women can establish their roles as traditional wives. Most wives believe that their chances are better than average that they will be able to live that way.

At the same time, they have some misgivings. First, according to nine wives, they were anxious about whether or not they and their husbands were going to be

"strangers"; that their husbands would disrupt the kinds of lives they had established for themselves. The source of their anxiety was the fear that enforced incarceration and separation had encouraged them and their husbands to develop in very different directions. During imprisonment, these wives reorganized their households around settled and conventionally oriented lifestyles. These wives feared that many patterns that they had established would not be satisfactory to their husbands. Second, seven neophytes and one old timer reported that they had no idea what to expect in the role of parolee and parolee's family. Wives had no sense of what their husbands would expect from them. Thus, they were likely to speculate about possible reentry problems. Finally, seven wives worried that their husbands would simply resume the cycle of unemployment, hard living, and criminal activity.

With parole or extended furlough papers⁴ in hand, 15 prisoners returned home to what is usually a joyful reunion. Reunions, however, do not last forever. Afterwards, couples encounter the problems and dilemmas of reorganizing their families. Reorganization was seen by wives as essential for establishing settled and conventionally oriented lives. Common elements emerged in the kinds of reorganization couples undertook. Either they 1) settled down or 2) resumed hard living and criminal activities.

Nine wives reported that they and their men had reorganized their households within the framework of a settled lifestyle. They further reported that their husbands actively attempted to transform their identities from ex-convicts to ordinary citizens and to establish a more settled or square john lifestyle. These men frequently followed a very narrow and exacting path. For instance, they often adopted steady work patterns. When not working, they spent most of their time at home watching television, listening to their stereos, etc. If they drank or consumed drugs, they did it moderately. They looked to their wives and families for support and avoided contacts with criminally oriented friends and family members.

Six of this group reported that their marital roles were based on traditional sex roles: Their husbands continued to be the economic providers, with their wives primarily responsible for the domestic and child rearing chores. The women saw these kinds of marriages as settled or "doing good." In all of these cases, some mutually satisfying marital patterns were established. Whether or not

wives had had intimate and satisfying marital relations before prison, they reported that they and their husbands discovered new values in family life and established a more cooperative relationship. Husbands approved of their wives' management of the households and children during separation. In turn, these wives approved of their husbands' newly acquired commitment to a conventional lifestyle.

As the months went by, however, more wives were astonished, bewildered, and sometimes driven to despair when they learned that their husbands had resumed some old and all-too-familiar patterns they had established before prison. Shortly after release, six women reported that their husbands were "not doing too good." Three more made this observation 6 months later. Their husbands' commitments to settled ways of living had apparently been short lived; in particular, they were unemployed, associating with criminally inclined friends, staying out late, drinking and consuming drugs, or perhaps having short term extra-marital affairs.

Problems of Reentry

The major problems paroled prisoners face center upon getting and keeping a steady job. Twelve men were steadily employed shortly after they were released from prison. However, most of these men had been released from prison with no training and few, if any, employable skills which would qualify them for jobs which provide a steady income. Few prisoners actually received serious job training inside northern New England's correctional facilities or through arrangements with outside agencies. Most work within the prisons or on work release was unskilled or, at most, semi-skilled. According to wives' accounts, only three men actually received some kind of job training while serving their time.

Three men had been released from prison with no jobs in hand and remained unemployed. Their wives reported that they did not appear to be motivated to find work. The most frequent explanation given by the husbands was that they needed a "rest from prison" or that they were taking a "little vacation" before looking for work. By contrast, the three wives who worked outside their homes during their husbands' imprisonment continued to be employed. The wife who was a college student continued her studies. The remaining 10 wives continued to be housewives and kept their welfare grants as supplements to their husbands' incomes. Three arranged to have their unemployed husbands included in these grants. None of the women who remained at home were totally dependent on their husbands' incomes. Most looked to their husbands to provide for their families' economic well-being, which they saw as necessary for a settled lifestyle. Thus, all women felt that "settling down" did not simply mean spending time at home listening to the stereo,

⁴ The "extended furlough" program allows prisoners to adjust to working and living within their communities while still under the general supervision of the correctional system. Extended furloughs can be revoked when prisoners violate community rules. When extended furloughs are revoked, prisoners are returned to prison to resume their sentences.

Parole, on the other hand, allows prisoners to serve the remaining parts of their sentences while living in the larger community. Parole is a privilege and can be revoked if parolees violate conditions of their parole. If it is revoked, they are returned to prison to serve the remainder of their sentences. If parolees commit crimes while on parole, they may be tried, sentenced if found guilty, and returned to serve additional terms.

watching television, or providing them with companionship, but that it necessarily involved steady employment.

By the end of the field research, 8 of 15 men were unemployed. In three cases, the reason for this was that the men had been laid off since they had been hired as temporary workers for government-sponsored or seasonal jobs. Two men quit because they really did not want low-paying, unskilled jobs under poor working conditions. The three men who were unemployed on release simply did not look for jobs.

Unemployment was a source of problems and stress for most women. Six said that their unemployed husbands would consider accepting jobs which offered them more status and prestige or that their physical ailments prevented them from searching for work. Often, they reported, the men simply avoided the subject by being home as little as possible. Contrary to what one might expect, most men did not find themselves stigmatized when seeking employment; only two women reported that their husbands' statuses as "ex-cons" interfered with their obtaining satisfactory employment.

For all six wives, unemployment meant a continuation of grinding poverty. All these wives either continued their welfare grants or reapplied when their husbands become unemployed. One wife, who received public assistance when her husband was in prison, reported that when he was released, her grant was automatically terminated. This was most acutely felt by her family, since her husband was not working.

They stopped our welfare and medicaid and everything. He didn't earn enough money in prison to qualify for Aid to the Unemployed Fathers. . . We're at rock bottom. I've been writing bad checks to eat. I still get a small amount of food stamps. I've been working myself sick. I have to go to work whether I'm sick or not. There is only my income to feed the three of us. I can't afford to take off a day from work or we'll starve to death. I'm working and I'm responsible for Frank now, but he's not working. It hurts me bad. I make \$2.99 an hour. I'm the working head of the household and I support the family. General Assistance won't help.

It is interesting to note, however, that wives whose husbands were working were not significantly better off; even if husbands were employed, their families could continue to be extremely poor. Four wives reported that their husbands' incomes were far less than what they had previously received from welfare. Moreover, wives were now not just maintaining themselves and their children, but also their husbands. However, almost all wives expected that their husbands would eventually obtain adequate employment.

By contrast, only three women did not equate unemployment with poverty. They were employed and provided the economic foundation for a middle class lifestyle. Hence, their husbands' incomes were not necessary. Another wife, whose husband had a highly skilled position in a water treatment plant, reported that

her family was economically better off as a result of her husband's job and a welfare grant that covered her handicapped child.

The stresses and strains of poverty took an immediate toll on 12 wives. Moreover, the long held dreams which sustained them during enforced separation were rapidly disintegrating. Their husbands' inability to achieve one primary aspect of their dreams led to resentment among these wives:

One of these days I'm going to be fed up. When I go back to work and he sits on his fat ass at home, I'm going to kick him out. I don't want to change him. I want the lazy bastard to work. I'm not supporting him—not anymore. I see my mother's life all over again—supporting a lazy bastard. I'll go back to nursing until I can't work there any longer.

Repeating Hard Living Patterns

As we noted earlier, most women bring dreams of home and family, of a predictable and conventional life, into the reunions. Yet for many, there is a gap between these dreams and reality. Most wives almost immediately find themselves struggling with not-so-conventional marriages. A major issue confronted by these wives is their husbands' hard living.

Wives' accounts of their lives strongly resemble those portrayed by Howell in *Hard Living on Clay Street* (1973). Five components seem characteristic of this life pattern: 1) marital instability, as evidenced by male infidelity and/or separation from their wives; 2) violence, especially wife beating; 3) heavy drinking or drug abuse; 4) intermittent and chronic unemployment; and 5) seeking adventure in criminal and quasi-criminal activities, frequent absences from home with peers, hanging out in local bars, etc.

Within 6 months, nine of the unemployed men had resumed pursuing at least two of these elements of hard living. Eight wives reported that they were most disturbed by the fact that their husbands resumed their old patterns of alcohol and drug use. Six of these wives also noted that when their husbands reactivated old prison friendships, it indicated to them that trouble was about to happen. These wives emphasized that dissociation from friends or acquaintances who are criminally involved was an important component of "going straight."

Four wives provided an explanation for their husbands' resuming their old criminal ties. They indicated that their husbands gravitated back to these friends because they believed that other people cannot appreciate their prison experiences. Thus, wives who dreamed, during enforced separation, about evenings spent in front of the television with husbands, now spent evenings alone waiting for their husbands. Husbands' "night out with the boys" all too frequently became "nights out with the boys." Four wives believed that their husbands were not

only associating with questionable peers, but with women of questionable intentions.

Six wives reported that they usually resorted to nagging and complaining as a way of attempting to deal with this situation. Arguments erupted. It was then that physical assaults by husbands on wives frequently took place. No matter how severe the batterings, all wives were reluctant to inform either the police or their husbands' parole officers. They simply did not want to be responsible for sending them back to prison.

This hard living severely threatened the lifestyles wives had established during enforced separation. Yet, they continued to adjust to their husbands' problems and to the marital conflicts related to these reentry problems. They coped because they continued to believe that their husbands would eventually come around to a settled lifestyle.

Repeating Cycles of Unemployment, Hard Living, and Crime

Within 6 months, nine women reported that their husbands were involved in crime again. Nine husbands had violated at least one condition of parole—such as associating with known criminals, possession of guns, drinking excessively, and drug consumption. Six had participated in chaotic, careless, unskilled, and opportunistic crime—such as burglary, check forging, aggravated assault, or shoplifting. In all cases, these crimes were alcohol or drug-related:

He went and got me some slacks, three pairs of shoes, a jacket, a digital clock and he got himself dungarees and jackets. I broke my sandal and he said, "I'll get you a pair of shoes." . . . That's Frank's way of taking care of us. It's the only way he knows.

I went to the car and waited for him to come back. I told him "you're crazy!" He said that this store is the easiest and I shouldn't worry. . . . That petrifies me. He sat Debra on top of the meat in the grocery store and wheeled her out on top of it. What would happen to the kid if he had been caught?

In another case, the husband resumed his sexual patterns, e.g., masturbating while watching couples' sexual activity on television, reading pornography, and so forth:

It was so dumb. We had had a good steak dinner. We had decided to watch a movie on the TV. When the movie was ready to come on, he changed his mind. He wanted to watch Juke Box. Here I am all ready to watch this movie and we're going to see Juke Box. He went to get a beer and I associated beer with sex and sex with watching something like Juke Box on the TV. I immediately felt that I was back in the same old spaces. I think that Juke Box is stimulating, like sex. He said that he'd go upstairs and watch it alone and I could watch my movie down here. I felt that he wanted me to get him angry so that he could go and masturbate.

All these women were afraid that their husbands were going to return to prison. Six had become reconciled to this eventuality. Within 6 months, four husbands had had some type of encounter with the police which had not led to arrest, e.g. they were searched, questioned, warned

by the police, or stopped for a traffic violation. It came as no surprise to four wives when they learned that their husbands had been picked up by the police. Two of these wives reported that their husbands' status as ex-convicts was not at issue and that the police had some other basis for suspicion. Only two old timers indicated that their husbands had been picked up by the police because of their extensive criminal records.

By contrast, six women whose husbands rigorously conformed to a settled or a middle class lifestyle, also encountered old and familiar problems. Once again, these were related to unemployment.

Parole Success and Parolees' Wives

In the early stages of reentry, there appeared to be differences in the kinds of support the 15 women provided for their husbands. All not only wanted to help their husbands to keep the conditions of their paroles, but to increase their husbands' motivation to settle down.

Wives' Responses to Settled Husbands

The six women whose husbands adopted a more settled lifestyle claimed that they were not overly concerned about their husbands resuming criminal activities. Instead, they were preoccupied with assisting their husbands to fit into a new pattern.

A year later, not one of these men had been charged with a parole violation or arrested. Although wives of these settled husbands are sure that their husbands are going to stay out of trouble, they also describe preventive strategies they employed in order to prevent any further "troubles":

Q: Do you ever feel concerned that he's going to get into trouble?

A: If I bring it up and ask, "Alfred what are you doing?" when he's been out, it would make him feel that I don't have any trust in him. I don't worry about it anyway. I don't ask him any questions about where he goes.

To reinforce their husbands' conventional behavior, these women provided their husband with socioemotional support. This kind of nurturing generally was initiated when husbands appeared to need support, patience, or love. Here nurturing means building up the men's self-confidence, to assist them in transforming their social identities, to advise them about their character defects, to listen attentively to their problems, and so forth. One young woman described how she nurtured her husband:

I gave him a lot of positive reinforcement about his job. Anything positive that he does, I try to recognize it. When he told me about going to see the people in Burlington, I interrogated him and he got the full inquisition and I don't let him off the hook. A lot of times he talked to me and as I quiz him, he begins to see the reasons why he got involved in something. But I'm sure all this has to do with trying to rebuild his identity.

The six wives also resorted to the "pain-in-the-ass" strategy, spending countless hours reasoning with their husbands and showing them the consequences of their actions, etc. All had threatened that future nonconventional behavior would result in the loss of their wives and children. Furthermore, these wives undertook at least one of several preventive actions, e.g., not allowing alcohol or drugs in their homes, keeping track of their husbands' whereabouts and the kinds of friends with whom they were associating.

Nevertheless, these wives claimed that their husbands' successful parole performance could not be ascribed to these strategies. Instead, they saw more important factors at play. First, these husbands had returned home more stable than they were before prison. This stability, they noted, increased their husbands' determination to avoid criminal activities. Second, four wives reported that prison had equipped their men to avoid "troubles" by providing them with vocational skills and/or educational training. Some gained insights into their drinking problems and others acquired a strong distaste for prison.

Although six men had not been returned to prison for parole violations or crimes, they did not all reestablish stable marriages. Of the six, two wives filed for divorce. According to the wives, they and their husbands had drifted apart as a consequence of the changes in lifestyles during enforced separation. Many patterns established during enforced separation no longer seemed satisfactory to one or both partners and the spouses were unable to adjust. According to these women, the major issue was not whether their husbands were going to resume their "old bags," but whether they themselves could continue to maintain their independence and lifestyles. Over the months since reunion, they had grown increasingly distant from each other. Further, these wives had become increasingly indifferent to whether or not their husbands would perform successfully while on parole; their own sense of independence had assumed priority over supporting their husbands.

Wives' Responses to Husbands' Hard Living and Crime

During imprisonment, dreams and promises served as a vehicle for sustaining wives' commitments to their husbands. On release, many wives realized that their husbands were becoming increasingly preoccupied with hard living. During reentry, most wives reported that these dreams and promises became tarnished but, nevertheless, remained a vital mechanism they utilized to reinforce their beliefs in the permanence of their marriages.

In order to maintain these dreams, wives employed accommodative strategies designed to divert their husbands from deviant behavior, often utilizing several such strategies. Sometimes they reported that they used an array of strategies until they found one that worked, at

least temporarily. The strategies most frequently employed were 1) nurturing, 2) acting like "pains-in-the-asses", 3) passive distance, and 4) co-deviance.

As time went on, wives were less and less likely to respond to their husbands' hard living with nurturing. In general, old timers were less likely than neophytes to nurture their husbands. When wives engaged in nurturing, it was usually to avoid physical battering, to deal with husbands who were drunk, and to deal with the resumption of sexually deviant behavior. As in the case with wives whose husbands settled down, "nurturing," took the form of providing emotional support, listening attentively to husbands, as well as attempting to strengthen their self-confidence.

Nurturing was generally ineffective in breaking the cycle of arrest, courts, and prison. When wives tried nurturing and found it ineffective, seven of the nine turned to the "pain-in-the-ass strategy." Since all the wives had had experience with their husbands' hard living prior to prison, they know what to expect and acted accordingly. These wives resorted to playing out a full-fledged spy game. They attempted to keep track of their husbands' activities outside their homes and the kinds of friends with whom they hung out. If the men were spending household money for their own purposes, the wives might attempt to control the money, hide their checkbooks, etc. Some women also resorted to hiding the wine or whiskey bottles, drugs, knives, or the car keys, in an effort to block future moves their husbands might make. All the wives resorted to nagging, berating, and arguing with their husbands. Three wives nagged their husbands about maintaining contact with their parole officers. One wife even pinned the parole regulations on the wall so that her husband could continually see them. An old timer described why she dogged her husband:

I just won't stand for Ruddy to be drunk. I feel good about that. Since he's been home, he's been drunk twice. And he always has an excuse for being drunk. I don't take it. I blow up. He came home drunk and he gave me a lot of crap. I told him to suffer. I said, "Just suffer!" We went to court about my daughter and after court he went out and celebrated. When he got home, I told him to suffer. And then I gave him some Digel and he got terrible sick. He suffered.

Frustrated and fearful, these wives argued with their husbands in hopes that this strategy would change their behavior. Arguments centered around their husbands' failure to provide satisfactory incomes and around their inability to fulfill their dreams for a settled life. Marital conflicts also erupted around the wives' fears that their husbands would return to prison. Accordingly, they were more likely to escalate their demands as time went on. Their increasing frustrations were often expressed in angry outbursts and statements that came as a surprise to their husbands:

A lot of us assume this mother figure position with our men. We keep telling them all the things they can't do because they would get in trouble. We get so uptight over what they do and so fearful that they are going to get back into trouble again that we end up nagging them about all the things they shouldn't be doing. So to them it feels like they're still in prison because they have someone else who is telling them continually. And the more you tell them what to do, the more they rebel.

In five cases, the more argumentative the women became, the more their husbands got into hard living. Seven wives considered informing parole officers about their husbands' violations. Two were afraid to do so, but four actually did. They thought that parole officers could relieve them of some responsibility for their husbands' behavior and also control their husbands to the point where they would not get rearrested. Initially two old timers attempted to abide by the prison code of "no snitching." But once their husbands' behavior began to interfere with their roles as mothers, they used parole officers as a last resort.

These four wives reported that parole officers did not respond as they expected. Many wives complained that parole officers were indifferent to their situation and did not even attempt to pressure their husbands into changing their behavior. None of the men involved were returned to prison for parole violations. In only one instance did an officer put pressure on a man to abide by parole rules and regulations. Only one husband was charged with parole violation. From the wives' accounts, it appeared that parole officers were more likely to respond when an event had blown up than they were before this had happened. In one instance, the wife, whose marriage had been conflict-ridden, described how she and her husband argued at a night spot. The husband, quite drunk, damaged his wife's car when she attempted to leave. While she was staying at a friend's home, her husband called her to inform her that he was destroying their home. She promptly called the police:

I got on the phone and he told me to get my ass home. I said, "Where are you?" He said, "I'm at your house." I told him that I was afraid of him and that I wasn't going near him. He told me to come home or he'd kill me. I told him not to come here. Then I heard all this crashing and he came back to the phone and said, "There goes your stereo, you'd better come home." Then he changed his tune and started pleading, "Please come home." And he kept going back and forth like that, from violent to pleading. He wouldn't hang up the phone. I could hear all the noise and crashing. Then he picked up the phone again and said, "Are you coming home now! I'm making a nice wreck here!" Then he said, "Okay, I'm gonna kill myself!" And he hung up. I called my neighbor Bruce and asked him to check on Tim for me. He said he would but then he came back and said that he wouldn't go in there with a 10-foot pole with all that noise. It was then I called the police.

The parole agency recommended that this man's parole be cancelled and that he be sent back to prison. His wife filed for divorce.

Separating from their husbands was not a new strategy

for most wives. Flight was one seemingly logical way to control what they perceived as their husbands' failure to fulfill their expectations. All nine wives had tried separation, sometimes more than once. However, they had usually returned to their husbands within a few weeks.

Separation serves several functions for wives. First, it appears to be a way out of the cycle of arrest, courts, and prison. Second, they think that separation can teach their husbands the value of family life and, therefore, encourage them to renew their commitments to the dream of settling down. Finally, it can be used to make a strong statement that the wives will no longer tolerate their husbands' behavior.

Enforced separation contributed to wives' ability to initiate separations. During their husbands' imprisonment, they saw how manageable life could be without them. This encouraged wives to believe that their husbands were "luxuries" they could no longer afford:

Q: Are you planning to leave him?

A: I have my own furniture and I still have welfare. I don't need no guy. I can live without a guy. It doesn't bother me anymore. Him being in jail so long. He's been in and out of jail these 7 years. I'm used to living without a guy.

All these ways of acting like a "pain-in-the-ass" usually bring some relief. But they also yield only temporary results. For a period of time, household money is more effectively controlled. For varying periods, husbands are reminded that they can be returned to prison for parole violations. Some stop their "troublesome" activities. Yet the costs of constantly scolding are high. When wives employ this strategy, their husbands become increasingly resentful, further alienated from their wives, and eventually resume hard living.

When their husbands did respond in these ways, five wives then reverted to another strategy: passive distance. These wives were likely to behave like women in classical literature: throw up their arms to the sky and bemoan their fate. By withdrawing, the women reported, they could not communicate with their husbands about pressing household concerns or dissatisfactions with their activities. Instead, they become absorbed in themselves and their children, kept their mouths shut, and did not attempt to interfere with their husbands' enterprises, or have any knowledge of them. They seldom questioned the men about their associates or "business" activities. They withdrew whenever their husbands brought drugs, stolen goods, criminal associates, etc. into their homes. By withdrawing into silence, these wives could avoid arguments which might lead to violence. However, in assuming this coping strategy, they once again encountered their husbands from a position of perceived powerlessness:

Q: How are you trying to work things out?

A: Mostly, I keep my mouth shut. And I'm not a person to keep my mouth shut. He comes and goes as he wants. When he is home, we sit here at night and we don't talk. I'm doing this for the kids. I don't want the kids without a father. I was brought up without a father.

Once the wives employed this strategy, they had given up any responsibility for their husbands' actions; as far as they were concerned, their husbands were out of their control.

Wives reported that they derived certain satisfactions from employing passive distance. It allowed them to control the kind of information they could acquire about their husbands' activities—information which might possibly threaten their perceptions of their husbands as "good" guys. Wives generally attempted to observe only what they and their husbands deemed safe. Passive distance also reinforced the wives' determination to preserve their marriages. By acquiring scant information about their husbands' hard living and criminal activities, they could consolidate themselves in their roles as mothers and put away those parts of their roles as wives that would potentially threaten the stability of their marriages. When their men continued to pursue hard living, for instance, the wives intensified their activities as home managers, as disciplinarians for the children, and as decisionmakers: they become "domestic controllers." As wives, they held on to their obligations to service their husbands: they fed them, did their laundry, kept their homes according to their husbands' standards, and had sexual intercourse with them. What the wives derived from this strategy, then, was the illusion that husband-wife-children roles were viable and intact.

One of the least frequently employed strategies was co-deviance. To preserve her marriage, one woman resumed the pattern prior to her husband's arrest: drinking heavily with him and issuing bogus checks to raise money for alcohol and drugs. Co-deviance allowed this wife, once again, to normalize her husband's behavior by joining him in his marginal status. Finally, one wife hoped to deter her husband from participating in criminal activities by independently initiating her own.

Consequences

Rearrest therefore came as no surprise to the wives involved. Of the nine husbands who gravitated towards hard living, seven were arrested again. Five of these husbands had subsequently been imprisoned, while two had charges dropped. All these men and their wives were old timers, except for one neophyte who was instrumental in having her husband's parole revoked.

Discussion

The present article complements earlier research on parole performance of married prisoners by providing prisoners' wives perceptions of reentry problems and elucidating those problems which frustrate attempts to support paroled husbands. Prior to their husbands' release from prison, the majority of wives expected that their husbands' criminal activity was a "thing of the past" and that they were ready to settle down, obtain jobs, and provide adequate incomes to support their wives and children. Reentry, however, presented wives with some difficulties in establishing stable and conventional lifestyles. It is important to note that the problems encountered by prisoners' wives, almost universally, are reported as stemming from their husbands' "failures" to establish settled lifestyles for themselves. Given this, their husbands' unemployment is most worrisome for the women. When unemployment is combined with such elements of hard living as financial irresponsibility, drinking and drug habit, physical assaults and crime, then there is cause for the women to be alarmed. These "failures" on the part of their husbands, as perceived by the wives, can be seen as a threat to the settled lives that they generally established for themselves during imprisonment. Upon perceiving their husbands gravitating back to their "old tricks," all these women were afraid that their husbands would return to prison. These findings are consistent with observations that unemployment is a crucial issue in parolees' post-prison performance⁵ and further show that unemployment is also a crucial issue for wives of parolees.

As previously noted, several studies have indicated that post-prison success is associated with marital discord (Glaser, 1969; Irwin, 1970; Morris, et al., 1975). From the wives' accounts, we learn that there are two significant factors which contribute to marital discord: 1) specific patterns of household reorganization and 2) accommodative strategies adapted by wives. After their husbands' release from prison, reorganization was seen by the wives as essential for establishing settled and conventionally oriented lives. It appears that couples undertake reorganization either by settling down or by resuming a hard living lifestyle with criminal activities.

Most women, as noted earlier, expected their husbands to establish settled lifestyles after their release. Within 7 months, 9 of the 15 men were unemployed and gravitating back toward their pre-prison patterns: hard living and crime. Wives quickly moved toward the "pain-in-the-ass" accommodative pattern in order to deter their husbands from further hard living and crime and to encourage them to reintegrate into their households. Arguments most likely erupted between spouses whenever wives used this strategy. When other strategies proved futile, many wives shifted towards passive distance.

⁵ See, for instance, Erelksson, et al., 1973; Glaser, 1969; Morris, et al., 1975; Studt, 1967.

In contrast, some wives reported that their households had been reorganized on the basis of settled patterns of living. Their husbands were steadily employed or highly motivated to find work and they conformed rigorously to a settled lifestyle. There was wifely support for settling down. To reinforce their husbands' conventional behavior, these wives nurtured their husbands and less frequently prodded them.

The findings clearly indicate that none of the strategies reported were as effective as wives anticipated they would be. Wives do not appear to have much influence on whether or not their paroled husbands participate in criminal behavior, get rearrested, and returned to jail. At best, wives were able to achieve a momentary attenuation of some of the hard living or criminal activity they found most difficult to cope with. The majority experienced an overwhelming sense of powerlessness as a result of trying to deal with their husbands during this stage in their lives. Linked to this was a sense of inevitability about their husbands "getting into trouble with the law." This undermined the effectiveness of the strategies they adopted and made the task of steering the men away from criminal acts and hard living—and thereby preserving their marriage—even more difficult than it might have been.

Significantly, it appears that households which are reorganized around husbands' departures from settled patterns are likely to be conflict ridden since wives most frequently respond by acting like "pains-in-the-asses." Within this context, a variety of researchers have specifically noted that the failure rate for parolees is more than 10 times higher among those reporting conflict in their homes than among those whose homes are not conflict ridden. As noted earlier, this study lends credence to this finding in that marriages where husbands are living hard are likely to be conflict ridden. However, while hard living lifestyles are characterized by conflict ridden marriages, it appears that, in many cases, it is the hard living which precipitates the conflict, rather than the reverse. Further marital conflict can then encourage further norm violating activity by husbands.

It should be noted that much of what we have observed here about the texture of the relationships between parolees and their wives is not unique. It is likely that their patterns of interaction may constitute only one specific example of a more general type of marital relationship. There is an increasing body of literature that describes the kinds of reactions that wives formulate toward husbands who pursue some deviant lifestyle. The findings reported here are consistent with what we have learned about the family lives of alcoholics and the mentally ill, gamblers, and so on. The accommodative strategies utilized by prisoners' wives are not much dif-

ferent from those employed by others, e.g., the "pains-in-the-ass" strategy and nurturing.

Finally, wives' perceptions of their husbands' parole performance is consistent with the perspectives of "traditional" women who endure their marriages no matter how unsatisfactory they may be. This orientation is clear in wives' attitudes towards the roles that women, in general, ought to play within marriage. They readily accept its "permanence," the view that a "woman's place is in the home," that men ought to be the breadwinners, and that males ought to be heads of their households. Their marital expectations are similar to those of other women from similar social backgrounds: stable, conventional lifestyles. They want their husbands to work. They want neat and clean houses. They want material goods. They want companionship. Unfortunately, neither they nor their husbands have, as a rule, the kind of skills which would enable them to pursue this kind of settled living. Instead, they often find themselves living hard: Hard living provides men with a means of avoiding the pressures and difficulties involved in "settling down."

Future investigation of the parole system might benefit from analysis not only of how parole affects prisoners, but also of its impact on the wives and families of parolees. The present findings provide some important insights into these issues—but a great deal remains to be done. Wives' accounts reveal that the men who do and those who do not do well on parole make their own adjustments regardless of the kinds of support wives provide. Within this context, we have also noted that the wives display a remarkable variety of coping strategies. This variety suggests the need for further study to elucidate more fully the range and effects of such accommodative modes not only on the husbands but on the wives themselves. We therefore need a closer look at the extent to which some strategies must be more satisfactory than others, at least in terms of the wives own well-being and the extent to which they function to reinforce the wives' commitments to their marriages and to "keeping the family together."

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