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Stress and Coping Styles of Female Prison Inmates

by

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An Abstract of
Stress and Coping Styles of Female Prison Inmates

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This study was an exploratory endeavor which examined the various stressors that female prison inmates typically face, as well as the particular coping strategies they employ. A group of 200 female prison inmates were selected randomly from a women's prison in the midwestern United States. From this group of 200 inmates, 104 successfully completed the measures in this research project. The participants provided demographic information, and completed the Carver COPE measure as well as additional open-ended questions regarding various stressors which they had faced, and the coping styles which they utilized to deal with such stressors. Unlike a large portion of the existing research on stress and coping, this study attempted to take several factors involved in the coping process into account. For example, the inmate's appraisal of the stressor was determined, and the coping strategies employed were matched with the particular stressor to which the inmate was responding. Overall, the results suggest that inmate coping is a very complex process, which can be affected by several factors, such as demographic

variables, previous incarcerations, and the stressor with which the inmate is faced. For instance, it was found that minority inmates reported the use of significantly more planning strategies and positive reinterpretation than European-American inmates, while European-American inmates reported the use of significantly more behavioral disengagement than minority inmates. Age was also found to be a factor correlated with coping style, as the reported use of both mental disengagement and denial decreased with age. As the number of children an inmate has increased, there was an increase in the reported use of planning strategies and religion, and a decrease in behavioral disengagement. Regarding the narrative responses which the inmates provided in response to questions about stressors and coping styles, several categories emerged. Separation from loved ones was the most commonly reported stressor throughout the female inmates' incarceration. However, certain stressors, such as negative aspects of the prison environment, other inmates, and ambiguity of the situation, increased with time. It was found that the use of spirituality was the most commonly reported coping strategy throughout the female inmates' incarceration. Almost all other forms of coping increased with time, except for a decrease in maladaptive coping strategies. The findings of such research may impact early intervention strategies within prisons in order to decrease maladaptive behavior during confinement. The identification and strengthening of positive coping strategies in inmates may increase their chances of being utilized upon release into society.

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Stress and Coping Styles of Female Prison Inmates

Introduction

By the end of the year 2000, there were 91,612 female prison inmates, making up 6.6 % of the total inmate population (U.S. Department of Justice, 2001). The rate of increase for female prison inmates is greater than that of men; for example, the rate of increase for female inmates in the last ten years was 108 %, while the rate for males was only 77 %. Although female criminality has risen at such an alarming rate, the amount of research on the subject has not risen in proportion. This may be due in part to the fact that females tend to commit nonviolent crimes, and are therefore not considered as serious of a threat to society as men. These nonviolent offenses, which include prostitution, fraud, and drug offenses, are often a reaction to a problematic upbringing or environment. A large number of female inmates have suffered physical or sexual abuse, have come from impoverished backgrounds, are addicted to alcohol or drugs, and suffer from mental illness (Singer, Bussey, Song, & Lunghofer, 1995). It might be assumed that, due to all of the negative life experiences which female inmates have endured, serving time in jail or prison may be relatively less traumatic than many of their day-to-day experiences on the “outside.”

Porporino and Zamble (1984, pg. 403) suggest that, “The rational use of imprisonment requires that we understand how individuals are affected by the experience.” They also argue that the way in which an inmate copes with his or her time spent in prison helps to determine the overall effect of the prison sentence. For example, certain coping strategies might determine whether the prison term is generally a positive, rehabilitative experience or a negative, detrimental one. It has also been shown that the

way in which individuals cope with stress has a greater effect on the individual's outcome than the frequency or the severity of that stress which they experience (Lazarus & Launier, 1978; Lipowski, 1975). Therefore, by examining the ways in which inmates deal with stress, we may eventually gain a better understanding of how inmates can maximize the rehabilitative benefits of incarceration.

One prominent factor affecting many prison inmates is mental illness. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2001), in the year 2000, 16.2 % of all state prison inmates were diagnosed as mentally ill. According to the American Correctional Association (1990), one-third to two-thirds of incarcerated women require mental health services for psychological distress. It has also been found that mood-altering drugs are prescribed two to three times more for women in jails than for men. Fogel and Martin (1992) discovered that the depression level for incarcerated women in their sample was more than two times greater than the depression level for the general female population. In female-only confinement facilities, more than one in four inmates were receiving some form of therapy or counseling, and approximately 22 % were taking psychotropic medications (U.S. Department of Justice, 2001). However, it has been suggested that such psychological distress is not solely due to acute conditions developed from the prison environment alone, as Beck (1991) found that 21.5 % of a sample of female inmates had taken prescribed medication for emotional or mental health problems prior to their incarceration. Some stressors which may affect women more heavily than men are the struggle to maintain intact families, effort to sustain their parental role, and dealing with unresolved conflictual relationships (Negy, Woods, & Carlson, 1997).

Stress generally occurs when an individual is placed in a situation where his or her prior experiences or background don't easily lend themselves to interpretation of the current situation. According to Silverman and Vega (1990), a form of "culture shock" then occurs, which triggers the responses that are typically associated with stress. They argue that a prison constitutes a foreign environment to which a person responds with such culture shock. Common sources of stress which the inmate must face include loss of freedom, a limited number of facilities and programs, a high potential for violence, conflict with other residents or staff, lack of privacy, and overcrowding (Paulus & Dzindolet, 1993). Inmates also have to deal with such issues as excess noise, isolation, and boredom (Negy, Woods, & Carlson, 1997). Other sources of stress include dealing with prison rules, expectations of staff and other inmates, and sexual intimidation from other inmates (Sultan, Long, Kiefer, Schrum, Selby, & Calhoun, 1984). Inmates may also experience an increase in stress near their release time as they experience uncertainty about the "outside" (Bukstel & Kilman, 1980).

Long-term inmates, such as those who may spend several years or even life in prison, must deal with many of the same stressors as short-term inmates, except the duration is longer (Singer, Bussey, Song, & Lunghofer, 1995). Inmates who must serve long-term sentences must also deal with time management issues, maintenance of family and other relationships, and preservation of self-identity and self-esteem. There are concerns as to whether long term inmates will experience "institutionalization," or become so set in the ways of the prison environment that they lose interest with the concerns of the outside world. Whereas short-term inmates can chart their progress toward the goal of release, long-term inmates may experience the "barrier effect," in

which the only portion of one's life that he or she is able to focus on is the time spent in prison. The inmate's future is seen as unchanging, and the inmate tends not to make future plans. The inmate may be afraid that he or she will soon be unable to think for him or herself. The inmate may also fear dying in prison.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of imprisonment for women is separation from their children (Crites, 1976). There often seems to be a lack of concern by criminal justice personnel regarding this issue. However, according to the U.S. Department of Justice (2000), in 1999, approximately 63 % of all male and female federal prison inmates were parents of children under the age of 18. Coll, Surrey, Buccio-Notaro, and Molla (1998) suggest that incarcerated mothers are marginalized by society and their support systems, who believe that these women are not fit to care for their children due to their criminal activity. For example, their husbands, boyfriends, and other family members often refuse to bring their children for visitation. Also, some incarcerated mothers may even refuse to allow their children to visit because they do not want them to be exposed to the prison environment. In 1985, Baunach conducted a study involving incarcerated mothers, and found that most incarcerated mothers had been living with their children prior to incarceration. Also, many of the incarcerated mothers were trying to maintain contact with their children, and planned to reunite with their children upon release from prison.

According to Fogel and Martin (1992), mothers and nonmothers have different patterns of emotional distress while in prison. While they may suffer a similar amount of depression, they have dissimilar anxiety. They both experience high levels of anxiety at prison entry, but while nonmothers' anxiety lessens with time, mothers' anxiety level

remains high. Such sustained levels of anxiety in mothers is thought to be due to the fact that they must constantly deal with the separation from their children.

Masuda, Cutler, Hein, and Holmes (1978) studied the life events of individuals who are incarcerated versus individuals who have never been in prison. They found that prisoners led less stable lives than non-prisoners, and experienced significantly more incidences of changes in residence, work, divorces and separations, trouble with in-laws, and financial difficulties. Therefore, it may be concluded that individuals who eventually end up in prison are typically experiencing a number of major life stressors before their prison term even begins. Masuda et al. conclude that such a troubled life history, when coupled with development and personality characteristics, often plays an important part in influencing an individual to eventually pursue a criminal career.

Stress and Coping Theory

Folkman and Lazarus (1980, 1985) described three processes in dealing with stress. The first process is called “primary appraisal.” During primary appraisal, a person perceives an event as a threat to one’s self. Lazarus (1990) argues that stress is neither in the environment nor in the person, instead it reflects the interaction of a person’s motives and beliefs with an environment which poses harm, threat, or challenge. In a study by McGown and Fraser (1995), it was found that the actual number of daily “hassles,” or stressors, was not related to symptoms of stress; instead, the accumulated severity of the daily hassles was related to stress symptoms. In other words, the more one perceives, or appraises, the stressors to be of great concern, the more likely the individual is to have physical manifestations of stress. Following primary appraisal, the next process is “secondary appraisal,” in which a person brings to mind a potential way to respond to the

threat. The third process is that of “coping,” or executing the response to the threat. Folkman and Lazarus have defined coping as “...the cognitive and behavioral efforts made to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts among them” (1980, pg. 223). In a sense, it is a form of adaptation. They also suggest that coping efforts serve two main functions: the management of the source of stress and the regulation of stressful emotions.

Coping has often been broken down into two main styles, “problem-focused coping” and “emotion-focused coping” (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Problem-focused coping is aimed at problem-solving, or actively doing something to alter the source of stress. This coping style is most often used when people feel that something can be done about the stressor. Emotion-focused coping deals with reducing or managing the emotional distress that results from the stressor. This coping style is most often employed when people feel that a stressor is simply something which must be endured.

Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) argue that there are many different forms of problem-focused as well as emotion-focused coping, and that these two main coping styles can further be broken down into sub-categories. One form of problem-focused coping is “active coping.” In active coping, a person takes active steps to attempt to eliminate or reduce the effects of the stressor. A second form of problem-focused coping is “planning.” When a person uses planning strategies, that person is thinking about how to cope with the stressor. In a sense, this is a form of secondary appraisal rather than coping itself. A third form is “suppression of competing activities,” in which a person will put other projects aside which may act as distractions, in order to better deal with the stressor. A fourth form is “restraint coping.” During restraint coping, a person waits until

an appropriate opportunity to act. The last form of problem-focused coping is “seeking social support for instrumental reasons.” Examples of this type of coping occur when people seek others for advice, assistance, or information.

The first form of emotion-focused coping is “seeking social support for emotional reasons.” Examples of this form of coping are seeking moral support, sympathy, and understanding. Another form of emotion-focused coping is “positive reinterpretation” in which a person views a stressor in more positive terms, or looks on the bright side. Other forms are “denial,” in which a person denies the reality of a stressful event, and its opposite, “acceptance.” One last form of emotion-focused coping occurs when people turn to “religion” to help them cope.

Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) also argue that people have dysfunctional ways of coping, which they separate from both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. One type of dysfunctional coping is “venting,” in which people deeply concentrate on and vent their emotions. Another type of dysfunctional coping is “behavioral disengagement.” Behavioral disengagement involves a sense of helplessness, when people just give up. People may also use “mental disengagement” in which they attempt to distract themselves from the stressor through acts such as sleeping, daydreaming, or abusing drugs or alcohol. Many people often associate “denial” as a dysfunctional coping strategy. However, it has been shown that distorted perceptions of reality through denial and rationalization may be effective for individuals awaiting enemy attack in a war (Bourne, 1970), and in parents of terminally ill children (Wolff, Friedman, Hoffer, & Mason, 1964).

There has been debate as to whether people tend to gravitate toward one stable coping style that they implement in a variety of situations, or if they vary their coping style with time or across situations. According to Suls and Fletcher (1985), coping is not necessarily an all-or-nothing response, but instead an individual may rely more heavily on one style than another. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) argue that coping is best understood as being determined by the relationship between the person and the environment, rather than by independent person or situation variables. However, McCrae (1989) suggests that coping behavior may also be learned and retained independently of personality.

Stress and Coping Research

Demographic Predictors. Several studies have been conducted which examine the effects of various demographic variables on coping style. Such variables include gender, age, race, and family structure. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) and Kessler (1979) found that overall, females are more vulnerable to stressful circumstances than are males. In dealing with such stressful situations, women are more likely to avoid confrontation, accept personal blame, and rely on social support networks (Labouvie-Vief, Hakim-Larson, and Hobart, 1987). In a study by McGown and Fraser (1995) which utilized a sample of individuals with physical or sensory disabilities, it was found that males make significantly more use of active-cognitive coping than females. Folkman, Lazarus, Pimley, and Novacek (1987) found that men tended to keep their feelings to themselves more than women, and that women used more positive reappraisal. In looking at the use of coping in a middle-aged community sample, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) found no gender differences in the amount of emotion-focused coping.

When looking at the effect of age on coping style in the middle-aged community sample, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) found no relationship between the two. Similarly, a study by McCrae (1982) found that older individuals cope in much the same way as younger individuals, and where they did utilize different coping strategies, it appeared to be largely due to the type of stress that was being faced. He also found that middle-aged and older individuals were less likely than younger individuals to rely on hostile reactions or escapist fantasy to deal with stress. In a study by Folkman, Lazarus, Pimley, and Novacek (1987), it was found that younger individuals used more active, interpersonal, problem-focused forms of coping, whereas older individuals used more passive, intrapersonal, emotion-focused forms of coping. Lastly, Levanthal, Suls, and Leventhal (1993) found that middle-aged individuals tend to use more avoidance and delay in coping with stress, which they suggest may be due to risk aversion due to biological decline.

When looking at the effect of race on stress and coping style, Neff (1985) did not find any differences between blacks and whites in their vulnerability to stress. He also found no evidence to support the assumption that socio-economic status exerts an influence on vulnerability to stress among blacks or whites. Plummer and Slane (1996) found that African-Americans used significantly more emotion-focused as well as problem-focused coping strategies than whites. They concluded that African-Americans may be exposed to unique stressors which require them to utilize a full range of coping strategies.

Inmate Coping. A few studies have also been conducted which have examined the coping styles of prison inmates. For instance, it has been found that bitterness and

expression of demoralization by the prison environment were most evident by a group of inmates who had served the shortest length of time. Also, a similar group of inmates having served the least amount of time showed a pattern of greater distress on measures of anxiety, depression, and hopelessness (Sapsford, 1983). Silverman and Vega (1990) found that intensity of male and female inmates' anger in response to stress decreased with age, along with an increase in suppression or control of anger. These findings may suggest that inmates are better able to adjust to their environment with time, as measured by symptoms of distress. While some studies have found that the coping styles of inmates remain the same over time (Paulus & Dzindolet, 1993), Folkman (1985) and Folkman and Lazarus (1980) argue that coping is a dynamic process which varies. Zamble and Porporino (1988) have found that over time, inmates tend to cope by withdrawing from social contact or activities. There is an increase in the amount of passive behaviors, such as watching television or listening to music throughout the first three or four months. They also increase their amount of inner-directed hostility (Heskin, 1974). However, after learning the "rules" of the prison, inmates begin to feel an increased sense of control (Zamble & Porporino, 1988). Over time, inmates experience an increase in their social problems inside the prison while experiencing a decrease in social problems outside of the prison (Paulus & Dzindolet, 1993). With time, inmates also tend to experience a drop in the number of people they can depend on for social support. For long-term inmates, association with other long-termers leads to the development of a certain perspective (Singer et. al, 1995). One aspect of this perspective involves maturity, in which the inmates more thoroughly consider their actions instead of acting impulsively. With aging, they also gain experience, and they know how to get things done for themselves, as well

as what to expect from officers. This perspective results in the inmate staying out of trouble and using his or her time more profitably.

In response to stress, Silverman and Vega (1990) found that female inmates controlled their anger significantly more than males, who were more prone to direct their anger outward. Jones (1988) has found that female inmates tend to organize into relatively enduring primary relationships in order to cope with their stress, such as friendships, romantic relationships, and groups which resemble a family structure. Mann (1984) has also found that female inmates often form family systems within the prison, specifically with other inmates with which they have become close. This is a response to loneliness, and can help to create a sense of belonging, security, emotional support, and help to reduce preoccupations with the outside world. It may also serve to fulfill economic purposes, such as providing items for the “family” from the commissary, and socialization purposes, such as teaching proper prison behaviors. Negy, Woods, and Carlson (1997) hypothesized that for female inmates, strategies which attempt to manage emotional distress rather than the actual stressor will work best since the inmate is often unable to change many facets of her environment. However, they found that both types of coping resulted in better adjustment. With regard to marital status, Silverman and Vega (1990) found that male and female inmates who are single scored higher on measures related to the expression of anger, and scored lower on anger control measures than married inmates.

Problems with Previous Research

One of the main criticisms of many studies examining stress and coping is the use of a cross-sectional sample to identify change across time. It can easily be argued that

such a cross-sectional method does not allow for inferences to be made regarding particular individuals' change with time. It cannot capture the dynamic nature of such adaptational efforts.

Secondly, the majority of studies conducted on stress and coping have utilized a "checklist" format in order to assess an individual's coping style. However, Coyne and Racioppo (2000) argue that in completing such checklists, respondents may draw upon very different stressful situations, with very different goals or options for coping. In other words, it is important to specify the particular stressor to which the respondent is referring to in identifying how he or she has attempted to cope with it. As Lazarus (1990) suggested, "It is artificial to measure stress independent of coping." So therefore, it would also make sense that it is artificial to measure coping without reference to the particular event which preceded the experience of stress.

A third problem arises when an inmate's appraisal of a particular stressor is not taken into account. Since an individual's appraisal of a particular event as posing a "threat" or "challenge" is inherent in activating a coping response, it therefore seems intuitive to explore this process as well.

Purpose of Present Study

Due to the fact that relatively little empirical research exists which examines the coping styles of female inmates, and because the research which does exist has resulted in somewhat dissimilar findings, the current study was an exploratory endeavor. The goals of the current study were as follows: 1) to distinguish what types of stressors female prison inmates must typically face, 2) to determine how stressful the inmates appraise these stressors, 3) to determine how the inmates cope with these various

stressors, and 4) to determine to what extent factors such as age, ethnicity, education level, motherhood, length of current sentence, number of previous incarcerations, and total time spent in prison affect an inmate's particular stressors or coping style.

Method

Participants

The participants were 104 female inmates housed at a women's prison in the midwestern United States. They ranged in age from 18 to 58 years of age, with a mean age of 34.37 years ($SD = 9.08$). The inmates also represented various ethnicities, with 51% European-American, 41% African-American, 6% biracial, 1% Hispanic, and 1% Indian. This sample is a fairly accurate representation of the general prison population from which they were selected, which consisted of 1,687 female inmates, of which 53% are European-American, 44% are African-American, 2.5% are Hispanic, and .4% are considered "Other." The inmates in this sample had a wide range of educational backgrounds, ranging from less than 8th grade to more than four years of college. The mean educational level completed was 11th grade ($SD = 1.84$). Of the inmates surveyed, 83.5% were mothers. For those inmates with children, the number of children ranged from 1 to 8, with 21.6% having one child, 22.7% having two, 21.6% having three, and 17.6% having more than three children.

The inmates had been sentenced to various lengths of imprisonment, ranging from 6 months to life, with a mean sentence length of 97.42 months ($SD = 118.65$). They had all served various lengths of their sentences, from 3 months to 20 years. The mean sentence length served at the time of the survey was 50.07 months ($SD = 50.57$). For 40.2% of the inmates, this particular sentence was not their first. The inmates reported

being incarcerated up to as many as 10 times previously, with a mean of 2.11 total incarcerations ($SD = 1.80$). They reported various amounts of total time spent in prison throughout their lifetime, ranging from 3 months to 23 years, with a mean of 60.88 months ($SD = 57.40$).

Measures

Demographic Form with Qualitative Data on Stress and Coping: Demographic information was obtained from each inmate (see Appendix A). The inmate was asked to report general information such as age, ethnicity, education, and number of children. They were also asked to provide information regarding the length of their sentence, as well as the length of time they have served their current sentence. They were then asked to report the number of previous incarcerations and the total amount of time they have spent in prison. In order to provide information regarding particular stressors to which an individual is responding, the inmates were also instructed to report the stressors which they had to endure during their first few days in prison, as well as the stressors which they must endure presently, or at the time of the study. They were also asked to rate how stressful they appraised these stressors, using a scale of 1 to 10. They were then asked what strategies they used to cope with these stressors when they first entered prison, as well as how they cope at present. Lastly, they were asked to respond to a question regarding their perceived locus of control. This qualitative measure was administered along with the COPE in order to determine the types of stressors with which the inmates are coping, as well as to access other coping styles which may not have been included in the COPE.

Carver COPE: The Carver COPE (Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub, 1989) was used to assess each inmate's overall coping style (see Appendix B). The Carver COPE contains 53 items in which participants are asked to denote how often they usually employ a particular coping style. The participants respond according to a 5-point ordinal scale format with the following choices: "never," "rarely," "sometimes," "often," or "always". Many of the items in the measure were generated based on theoretical arguments about functional and less-functional properties of coping strategies. Participants are asked to rate which coping strategies they "generally" use, which would indicate an overall disposition toward certain coping styles, arranged into 13 sub-scales.

In the development of the COPE, tests were conducted for internal reliability, using Cronbach's alpha for each of its 13 sub-scales. These data were found to be adequate, with values ranging from $\alpha = .45$ to $.92$. Test-retest reliability of each sub-scale was also measured by administering the inventory to students at 6 or 8-week intervals after the original administration. Convergent and divergent validity data were also found to be adequate.

Procedure

In order to gain access to an inmate population, a proposal was sent to the state's Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, where it was reviewed by an IRB committee, including a prisoner advocate. Once final permission had been granted, a sample size of 200 female inmates was selected randomly by computer. These inmates were then asked to report to a classroom within the prison at a certain time of day. At these various times, a total of 4 groups of 50 inmates gathered together in a small auditorium. The inmates were then briefed as to the purpose of the study. This briefing

included the fact that their responses would remain anonymous, as well as the fact that their decision to participate in the project would not reflect positively or negatively on their status as inmates. Consent was obtained by the inmates checking a box on a consent form, stating that they agreed to the terms, and chose to participate. The inmates' names or identification numbers were not collected. They were then read the directions to the COPE, and were given 30 minutes to complete it along with the demographic information and qualitative questionnaire form. All of the items were read aloud to the inmates, in order to accommodate inmates with reading difficulties. After 30 minutes, the completed forms were collected. Throughout the course of one day, the other groups of 25 inmates were then administered the measures in a similar manner. Overall, a total of 106 inmates agreed to participate in the research study. However, two of these inmates did not fully complete the measures. Therefore, a total of 104 inmates, 52% of the original sample, completed the measures. The main purpose for most inmates' refusal to participate was either lack of interest, or time constraints.

Data Analyses

The data analyses are presented in three steps. Descriptive statistics are presented first. Second, correlation coefficients are presented which were used to assess the relationships among the continuous predictor variables (i.e. age, number of children, number of previous incarcerations) and the 13 Carver COPE subscales. MANOVAs are also presented which were used to determine the relationships between the categorical predictor variables (i.e. ethnicity, number of children, number of previous incarcerations, length of current sentence, length of sentence served) and the 13 Carver COPE subscales. Third, Chi-square analyses are presented which were conducted in order to determine the

relationship between the categorical predictor variables (i.e. ethnicity, number of children, number of previous incarcerations, length of current sentence, length of sentence served) and the frequencies of the stressor and coping strategy categories found in the inmates' narrative responses.

Results

Descriptive Variables

Length of Current Sentence and Time Served. Table 1 provides information regarding the length of the inmates' current sentence and length of current sentence served. Most inmates reported sentence lengths of less than ten years, with a mean sentence length of 97.42 months. Regarding their current sentence, the inmates reported varied amounts of time served, with the majority having served 1 to 3 years of their sentence.

Number of Incarcerations and Lifetime Prison Time. Table 1 provides information regarding the inmates' total number of incarcerations as well as total time spent in prison throughout their lifetime. The current incarceration was the first for the majority of the inmates, while slightly fewer had two or three total incarcerations. Overall, the inmates reported spending anywhere from one year to over ten years in prison throughout their lifetime, with the majority reporting one to three total years in prison.

Pearson correlations were performed among the various demographic variables. As expected, it was found that inmates' age was positively correlated with number of children ($r = .274, p < .01$), length of sentence served ($r = .265, p < .01$), and lifetime prison time ($r = .333, p < .01$). The inmates' number of children was negatively

correlated with length of the inmates' current sentence ($r = -.260, p < .01$), length of sentence served ($r = -.277, p < .01$), and lifetime prison time ($r = -.349, p < .001$).

Relationships Between Predictor Variables and Carver COPE Subscales

Pearson Correlations were calculated in order to determine the relationships between the continuous variables (i.e. age, number of children, number of previous incarcerations) and the 13 COPE subscales. Age was found to be negatively correlated with the inmates' reported use of mental disengagement ($r = -.247, p < .05$) and denial ($r = -.236, p < .05$). The inmates' number of children was found to be positively correlated with the inmates' reported use of planning strategies ($r = .202, p < .05$) and religion ($r = .221, p < .05$), and negatively correlated with the reported use of behavioral disengagement ($r = -.249, p < .05$). The inmates' number of incarcerations correlated positively with the reported use of both religion ($r = .230, p < .05$) and mental disengagement ($r = .218, p < .05$).

MANOVAs were used to determine the relationships between the categorical dependent variables (i.e. age, ethnicity, number of children, length of current sentence, length of sentence served, total number of incarcerations, total time in prison, and locus of control) and the Carver COPE subscales. No significant results were found using age, length of current sentence, length of sentence served, total number of incarcerations, and total time in prison. Although most inmates reported that they perceived the events in their lives as mostly being the result of their own actions, this was not found to relate to an individual's choice of coping strategy. However, significant differences were found between the coping styles of European-American and African-American female inmates. ANOVAs were then used to determine where the significant differences lay. These data

are presented in Tables 2 and 3. It was found that minority inmates reported the utilization of significantly more planning strategies than European-Americans ($F = 6.57$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). Minorities also reported the use of significantly more suppression of competing activities ($F = 4.36$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$) as well as positive reinterpretation ($F = 4.09$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$) and than European-Americans. Also, European-Americans tended to report the use of significantly more behavioral disengagement strategies than minorities ($F = 15.32$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$).

Inmates' Narrative Responses

Stressors. The inmates were instructed to report what they felt was most stressful about their first few days in prison, as well as what is most stressful at present. These open-ended responses were then categorized into five main categories by the author and a group of three undergraduate raters. The author first listed the categories which seemed to emerge verbatim from the inmate narratives, such as "separation from loved ones," "other inmates," etc. The raters were then asked to read through all of the narrative responses and indicate to which of these categories the narratives would belong. For the responses which were not so apparently easy to categorize, the raters were asked to first create categories themselves which they felt best fit the data, then gather as a group to form a consensus to create the remaining categories, as well as detailed descriptions of these categories.

Overall, the reported stressors fell into five main categories, which are presented in Appendix C. The first category is "separation from loved ones," which included such responses as missing significant others and children, interpersonal conflicts with friends and family due to prison confinement, and general concern over the health and well-being

of loved ones. The second category was “general prison environment,” which included stressors which naturally arise due to the restrictive prison environment. These responses included privacy issues, dealing with strict rules, admission procedures, feelings of embarrassment, shame, or loneliness, and general adjustment to a new environment. The third category was termed “negative prison environment.” This category included stressors which should not be naturally expected to arise from a prison environment, but rather from abuse or misuse of power. Such responses included physical or emotional abuse or threats by prison staff, poor medical care, overcrowding, lack of nutritious food, and inconsistent rules. The fourth category involved the “ambiguity of the situation,” and involved stress related to “not knowing.” This included an inmate not knowing what to expect, waiting on a parole decision, not knowing when she will be released, not knowing how to deal with her time in prison, and not knowing what to expect upon release. The fifth category was “other inmates” and dealt with the many stressors which specifically involve interactions with other inmates. Such issues included general interpersonal difficulties, arguments, relationship issues, and concerns about homosexuality.

Information regarding the frequency of use of these stressors both at the beginning of the inmates’ sentence as well as at the time of the study are displayed in Table 4. Overall, “separation from loved ones” was the most frequently reported stressor. Estimated effect sizes were obtained for the differences in reported stressors (Green, Salkind, & Akey, 2000).

Along with each stressor, the inmates were asked to rate how stressful they appraised it, on a scale of 1 to 10. The stressfulness ratings at the beginning of the inmates’ sentence ranged from 2 to 10, with a mean of 8.97. The median stressfulness

rating at prison entry was 10, which was also the most frequently reported rating. The stressfulness ratings at the time of the study ranged from 0 to 10, with a mean of 8.64. Again, the median “current” stressfulness rating was 10, which was also the most frequently reported rating. The beginning and current stressfulness ratings correlated at $r = .411$ ($p < .001$). The mean stressfulness ratings for each stressor category at prison entry as well as at the time of the study were examined, and the effect size was calculated for each stressor. The inmates rated “Separation from Loved Ones” as being the most stressful difficulty at the beginning of their sentence, with a mean stressfulness rating of 9.34. This stressor also remained the most stressful difficulty at the time of the study, with a mean stressfulness rating of 9.28. The two largest effect sizes were found for “other inmates,” which decreased in stressfulness, and the “negative prison environment,” which increased in stressfulness. These results are listed in Table 5.

Coping Styles. The inmates were then asked what strategies they used to cope with their stressors when they first entered prison, as well as how they cope currently. The same method which was used to create categories for the inmates’ stressors (use of undergraduate raters) was used in the formation of the coping strategies. Overall, the reported coping strategies fell into seven main categories, which are presented in Appendix D. The first category was “spirituality,” and included attending church, reading the Bible, prayer, meditation, and introspection. The second category was “organized support” and included formal modes of support, such as support groups, special programs, individual or group therapy, and medication. The third category, “peer/family support” included support provided by the inmates’ family or friends within or outside of the prison. “Activities” was the fourth category, and involved such actions as exercising,

doing work, reading, watching television, listening to music, engaging in hobbies, or simply “keeping busy.” The fifth category was “problem solving.” This category involved attempts at adjustment to the stressful situation, filing grievances, taking things “step by step,” and actively avoiding trouble. The sixth category involved “crying” as a form of emotional release. The seventh category, “maladaptive coping,” included maladaptive habits (i.e. smoking, oversleeping), lashing out, isolation, suicide attempts, giving up, and a general “inability to cope.”

The frequency distributions for the reported coping strategies both at the beginning of the inmates’ sentence as well as currently are displayed in Table 6. Overall, “spirituality” was the most frequently utilized coping strategy, followed by “maladaptive coping,” and “activities.” Estimated effect sizes were obtained for the differences in reported coping strategies (Green, Salkind, & Akey, 2000). With time, it appears that the reported use of almost all coping strategies increased, whereas “crying” and “maladaptive coping” decreased.

In order to better determine which coping strategies the inmates used with each particular type of stressor, the frequencies of the various strategies were examined based on the stressor which the inmate listed. Because some inmates reported more than one stressor or coping strategy, only the stressors and coping strategies which the inmates reported first were used in these analyses. At the beginning of their sentence, “Spirituality” was the most often used coping strategy listed when individuals were dealing with difficulties involving “Separation from Loved Ones” and “Ambiguity of the Situation.” “Maladaptive Coping” was the most frequently used strategy when dealing with the “General Prison Environment,” “Negative Prison Environment,” and “Other

Inmates.” At the time of the study, the inmates listed “Spirituality” as the most commonly used strategy in dealing with “Separation from Loved Ones,” the “Negative Prison Environment,” and “Ambiguity of the Situation.” “Maladaptive Coping” was listed as the most common strategy in dealing with the “General Prison Environment” and “Other Inmates.” These results are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

Relationships Between Predictor Variables and Inmates’ Narrative Responses

Chi-square analyses were performed in order to determine the relationships between the categorical predictor variables (i.e. age, ethnicity, number of children, length of current sentence, length of sentence served, number of incarcerations, and total time in prison) and the inmates narrative responses regarding stressors and coping strategies. These data are presented in Table 9. As mentioned earlier, since some inmates reported more than one stressor or coping strategy, only the stressors and coping strategies which the inmates reported first were used in these analyses. The following chi-square analysis ($X^2 = 18.601$, $df = 10$, $p < .05$) indicated the following: inmates with no children reported significantly less difficulty with “separation from loved ones” than inmates with children. Also, inmates with one to three children reported “general prison environment” as a stressor more frequently than inmates with no children and inmates with more than three children, whereas inmates with more than three children reported having significantly more difficulty with the “ambiguity of the situation” than inmates with fewer than three children. The following chi-square analysis ($X^2 = 26.95$, $df = 18$, $p < .10$) indicated that inmates who had served one year or less of their current sentence reported significantly more use of spirituality as a coping strategy than inmates who had completed more than one year of their sentence. These data are presented in Table 10. No significant results

were found looking at the relationships between the narrative stress and coping categories and ethnicity, number of children, length of current sentence, number of incarcerations, or total time in prison.

Discussion

General Findings

Overall, this study contributed to existing research on stress and coping in prison inmates, while focusing specifically on the experiences of female inmates. For instance, motherhood is a very important factor influencing women's prison experiences, and this factor was examined as it relates to the particular stressors which incarcerated mothers face, as well as the coping strategies they employ in dealing with these stressors. As mentioned earlier, this study also helped to bridge the gaps in existing research by determining the inmate's appraisal of the stressor, as well as matching the coping strategies employed with the particular stressor to which the inmate is responding.

In this study, it was found that as inmates get older, they are likely to have higher numbers of children. Interestingly, the results suggest that the more children an inmate has, the more likely she is to have a shorter prison sentence, as well as to have served less time in prison throughout her life. There are at least two possible explanations for this finding. First of all, judges may have a tendency to be more lenient in sentencing mothers, so that they are less likely to be sentenced to time in prison, or they may be sentenced to a shorter time in prison than those females who have no children. A second possible explanation could be that mothers are less likely to commit criminal acts, or to commit criminal acts which demand a harsher sentence, perhaps due to concern for their children.

The number of children that a female inmate has is also related to the way she typically copes with perceived stress. For example, those females with higher numbers of children are more likely to utilize planning strategies, as well as turning to spirituality, than are female inmates with fewer children. They are also less likely to use behavioral disengagement than inmates with fewer children. It could be hypothesized that the act of parenting may in some way affect which coping strategies a woman uses in various situations. Also, out of concern for their children, inmate mothers with several children may be less likely to engage in coping behaviors which might result in a worsening of the problem, such as trouble with prison staff.

The age of the female inmate is also related to the coping strategies which are utilized. For instance, the older an inmate becomes, the less likely she is to utilize denial or mental disengagement. In other words, the less likely she is to attempt to avoid the problem. However, as is often difficult to deduce with a cross-sectional sample, it is unclear whether these changes in the coping process are a result of age or cohort effects.

A related variable is the amount of time an individual has spent in prison throughout her life, or her amount of experience in a prison setting. It was found that female inmates with more prison experience are more likely to turn to spirituality in dealing with stressors. It was also found that those female inmates with more prison experience utilize significantly more mental disengagement strategies, which is contradictory to the earlier finding that older inmates utilize less mental disengagement. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that older inmates cope differently strictly due to their level of experience in the prison setting.

In examining the relationship between ethnicity and coping, it was found that minority female inmates utilize significantly more planning strategies, more positive reinterpretation, and more suppression of competing activities than non-minorities. Non-minority female inmates were found to utilize more behavioral disengagement strategies than minorities. One possibility for these differences is that minorities may utilize certain strategies that they have learned in dealing with prejudice and discrimination throughout their lives. In other words, it is possible that minorities may have had to rely on positive reinterpretation of seemingly helpless situations in the past, or perhaps the use of strategic planning has been helpful in order to assert themselves in a racially discriminatory environment. As for non-minorities, because they have typically not had to overcome such pervasive obstacles such as widespread prejudice and discrimination, they may be more likely to attempt to temporarily “escape” a situation, rather than be forced to actively deal with it.

At the beginning of the inmates’ sentence, as well as at the time of the study, separation from loved ones was found to be the most commonly reported stressor overall. This stressor, as well as “ambiguity of the situation,” was listed more frequently in inmates who were mothers. Again, because of the added concern for ones’ family, these stressors may have an added impact on those inmates who carry the responsibility of caring for others. They have greater difficulty being separated from their family, knowing that they are unable to care for their children, and they have more difficulty in situation which may make it unclear as to when they are going to be released.

Although separation from loved ones was found to be the most commonly reported stressor both at the beginning of an inmates’ sentence, as well as at the time of

study, the inmates seemed to have increasing difficulty with the “negative prison environment,” “ambiguity of the situation,” and “other inmates,” as they spent more time in the prison. This is likely due to the fact that, with time, the inmates have likely had to deal with a greater number of instances involving these particular stressors.

In dealing with these stressors, turning to “spirituality” was the most commonly reported coping strategy overall, both at the beginning of the inmates’ sentence, as well as at the time of the study. However, almost all other forms of coping increased with time, accompanied by a decrease in maladaptive coping. One could make an optimistic assumption that these inmates may be learning to cope more positively with their stressors as they gain experience and begin to adjust to the prison setting.

The coping strategies that the female inmates utilize were also examined in response to the particular stressors with which they were dealing. It was found that, at the beginning of their sentence, they tended to use “spirituality” in dealing primarily with “separation from loved ones” and “ambiguity of the situation,” while they tended to utilize maladaptive coping strategies in situations involving both the “general” and “negative” prison environment, as well as with “other inmates.” Their coping strategies seemed to remain fairly consistent by the time of the study; however, more inmates tended to use “spirituality” rather than maladaptive strategies in dealing with the “negative” prison environment. Again, this might possibly imply a positive adjustment to the environment, and use of more adaptive coping strategies.

Implications of Stress and Coping Research with Inmates

The examination of female inmates’ coping styles has several implications, particularly for rehabilitative purposes. As mentioned earlier, the success or failure of

coping responses may affect the overall perception of the prison sentence as helpful or harmful. For example, the findings could impact early intervention strategies and prevention of maladaptive behavior during confinement. Adjustment to a prison environment may also influence how an inmate will adjust to the community upon release.

The examination of inmate coping styles can also lead to implementation of new therapeutic techniques within the prison. For instance, once it is discovered what coping styles are employed, they can be utilized in a therapeutic setting, such as individual or group therapy. Also, particular skills of the inmates, such as writing or craft-making, may be found to be effective coping strategies. Such skills can be expanded upon to allow the inmate to utilize these skills for possible employment or profit upon release. It is important to recognize the strengths of these inmates, so that their own resources can be modified or expanded upon for maximum benefit, both for the individual inmate as well as society.

Suggestions for Future Research

In this study, the definition of “incarcerated” was not clearly specified on the demographic form. Therefore, some inmates may have included time spent in jail when answering the questions “Have you ever been incarcerated before?” and “If so, how many times?” Although it may have also been helpful to ask specifically about women’s experiences in jail in addition to prison experiences, these variations in responding may result in slightly inaccurate data regarding the participants’ incarcerations in a prison setting. Also, it was not clearly specified whether individuals should list one or several stressors, and similarly, one or several coping strategies which they employed. It was

therefore difficult to make assumptions regarding which stressor was most prominent for an individual, or which coping strategy was used most often. In order to prevent complication, the first stressor or coping strategy listed by the respondent was used in the analyses. However, the coping strategies used may be dependent on the interaction of the various combinations of stressors to which an individual is responding. In the future, it will be necessary to specify how many stressors or coping styles are to be listed.

Several inmates in this study refused to participate, most of whom stated that they did not wish to invest the time or effort into completing the questionnaires. It is possible that these individuals who did not participate may have been experiencing significantly more stress than those who were willing to invest the time and energy to participate. If this possibility were true, the results might have been different due to a selection bias of individuals whose daily lives were less negatively affected by their perception of stress.

Folkman and Moskowitz (2000) suggest that more emphasis should be placed on examining positive affect as it relates to coping, such as in cases of positive appraisal of potentially stressful events, as well as coping which generates positive affect. They argue that examining positive affect in the coping process may shed light on how coping can help people to avoid or minimize adverse effects of chronic stress, as well as how coping might help to promote psychological well-being.

Cramer (2000) suggests that a second process used for adaptation, the defense mechanism, is often overlooked in related research. He clarifies that while coping can be considered a conscious and intentional adaptational process, a defense mechanism could be defined as unconscious and nonintentional. It may be useful to examine the use of defense mechanisms along with tradition “coping” strategies in order to better obtain a

more thorough understanding of the many different ways in which individuals adapt to a challenging situation.

Lazarus (2000) suggests that questionnaires should only be the initial step in understanding coping, since they cannot allow us to identify an individual's goals or situational intentions in utilizing a particular coping style. In addition, we should work to measure the motivational patterns and belief system which mediates an individual's appraisal of the potentially stressful situation. Similarly, Coyne and Racioppo (2000) argue that without reference to an individual's goals, one cannot evaluate whether coping has been successful in a particular situation. This particular study did not inquire into an individual's desired outcomes for the stressful situation. Therefore, further research may take such goals into account and additionally work to examine the perceived efficacy of the particular coping strategies in relation to these goals.

Lazarus (2000) further asserts that it may even be misleading to separate coping into certain functions, such as "problem-focused" or "emotion-focused." Instead, he suggests that the different coping styles should be viewed as interdependent because they supplement one another in the overall coping process. Therefore, future research may wish to focus on more of a qualitative, process-oriented approach to gain a more in-depth view of the coping process.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Participant Demographic Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	Median	Mode	<i>SD</i>	Min.	Max.
Age <i>n</i> = 97	34.37	35.00 ^a	35.00	9.08	18.00	58.00
Education (years) <i>n</i> = 96	11.64	12.00	12.00	1.84	8.00	17.00
Number of Children <i>n</i> = 97	2.25	2.00	2.00	1.81	0.00	8.00
Length of Current Sentence (months) <i>n</i> = 97	97.42	60.00	60.00	118.65	6.00	684.00
Length of Current Sentence Served (months) <i>n</i> = 96	50.07	31.50	24.00	50.57	3.00	240.00
Number of Total Incarcerations <i>n</i> = 97	2.11	1.00	1.00	1.80	1.00	11.00
Total Time Spent Incarcerated (months) <i>n</i> = 97	60.88	42.00	24.00	57.40	3.00	276.00

^a Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

Table 2. MANOVA Table Representing Coping Style by Ethnicity.

Effect	F	Sig.	η^2	Observed Power
Λ	2.85	.00	.33	.98

Table 3. ANOVA Table Representing Differences in Coping Style by Ethnicity

Coping Style	<u>European-American</u>		<u>Minority</u>		F
	M	SD	M	SD	
Planning	14.31	3.59	16.04	3.00	6.57*
Supp. of Competing Activities	11.92	3.09	13.13	2.47	4.36*
Positive Reinterpretation	15.45	3.18	16.67	2.72	4.09*
Behavioral Disengagement	9.27	3.11	6.90	2.84	15.32***

*p < .05, ***p < .001

Table 4. Stressors Identified by Female Prison Inmates

Stressor	Beginning of Sentence	Currently	Estimated Effect Size
Separation from Loved Ones	54.7%	40.2%	.15
General Prison Environment	21.6%	10.3%	.11
Negative Prison Environment	17.4%	22.8%	.05
Ambiguity of Situation	10.3%	20.6%	.10
Other Inmates	12.3%	16.5%	.04
Nothing is Stressful	1%	3.1%	.02

* Percentages add up to more than 100% because some inmates reported more than one stressor at the beginning of their sentence (n = 19) and currently (n = 16).

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations of Stressfulness Ratings by Stressor Category

Stressor	Beginning of Sentence Mean (s.d.)	Currently Mean (s.d.)	<i>d</i>
Separation from Loved Ones	9.34 (1.13)	9.28 (1.72)	.04
General Prison Environment	8.47 (2.37)	8.78 (1.99)	.14
Negative Prison Environment	8.73 (1.42)	9.23 (1.28)	.37
Ambiguity of Situation	8.43 (2.94)	8.84 (1.39)	.19
Other Inmates	8.63 (2.00)	7.67 (2.27)	.45

Table 6. Coping Strategies Identified by Female Prison Inmates

Coping Strategy	Beginning of Sentence	Currently	Estimated Effect Size
Spirituality	43.2%	42.3%	.01
Organized Support	8.3%	14.5%	.06
Peer/Family Support	12.4%	16.5%	.04
Activities	19.5%	21.6%	.02
Problem-Solving	6.2%	9.4%	.03
Crying	11.3%	5.2%	.06
Maladaptive Coping	34%	27.8%	.06

* Percentages add up to more than 100% because some inmates reported more than one coping strategy at the beginning of their sentence (n = 29) and currently (n = 30).

Table 7. Coping Strategies by Stressor at Beginning of Sentence

Stressor	Most Common Strategy	Percentage Used
Separation from Loved Ones (n = 46)	Spirituality	42.6%
General Prison Environment (n = 18)	Maladaptive Coping	42.1%
Negative Prison Environment (n = 11)	Maladaptive Coping	63.6%
Ambiguity of Situation (n = 7)	Spirituality	42.9%
Other Inmates (n = 8)	Maladaptive Coping	50%

Table 8. Coping Strategies by Stressor at Time of Study

Stressor	Most Common Strategy	Percentage Used
Separation from Loved Ones (n = 32)	Spirituality	45.5%
General Prison Environment (n = 9)	Maladaptive Coping	44.4%
Negative Prison Environment (n = 15)	Spirituality	33.3%
Ambiguity of Situation (n = 19)	Spirituality	57.9%
Other Inmates (n = 12)	Maladaptive Coping	83.3%

Table 9. Relationship Between Inmates' Number of Children and Stressor Type:
Percentage Observed vs. Percentage Expected.

	<u>Number of Children</u>		
	No Children	1-3 Children	More than 3 Children
<u>Current Stressor</u>	% (exp. %)	% (exp. %)	% (exp. %)
Sep. from Loved Ones	12.5 (36.3)	41.4 (36.2)	41.2 (36.5)
Gen. Prison Env.	0 (10)	13.8 (9.8)	5.9 (10)
Neg. Prison Env.	25 (16.3)	15.5 (16.6)	11.8 (16.5)
Ambiguity of Situation	18.8 (20.6)	17.2 (20.9)	35.3 (20.6)
Other Inmates	37.5 (13.1)	8.6 (13.1)	5.9 (12.9)

Table 10. Relationship Between Length of Sentence Served and Stressor Type:
Percentage Observed vs. Percentage Expected.

	<u>Length of Sentence Served</u>			
	Less than 1 year	1-3 years	3.1-5 years	More than 5 years
<u>Coping Strategy</u>	% (exp. %)	% (exp. %)	% (exp. %)	% (exp. %)
Spirituality	50 (37.73)	30.8 (37.69)	50 (37.5)	26.9 (37.69)
Org. Support	33.3 (24.44)	11.1 (28.89)	33.3 (17.78)	22.2 (28.90)
Peer/Fam. Supp.	33.3 (25)	33.3 (28.33)	16.7 (18.33)	16.7 (28.33)
Activities	9.1 (24.55)	36.4 (29.09)	9.1 (18.18)	45.5 (29.09)
Prob.-Solving	20 (24)	0 (28)	40 (18)	40 (28)
Crying	0 (25)	50 (30)	50 (20)	0 (30)
Mal. Coping	17.4 (24.35)	43.5 (28.70)	0 (17.83)	39.1 (28.70)

Appendix A

Demographic/Qualitative Information Form

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Age _____
2. Race _____
3. What is the highest education level you have *completed*?
 - _____ less than 9th grade
 - _____ 9th grade
 - _____ 10th grade
 - _____ 11th grade
 - _____ 12th grade
 - _____ 1 yr college
 - _____ 2 yrs college
 - _____ 3 yrs college
 - _____ 4 yrs college
 - _____ more than 4 yrs college
4. Do you have any children? _____ If so, how many? _____
5. What is the length of your sentence? _____
6. How long have you been serving this sentence? _____
7. Have you ever been incarcerated before? _____
 - If so, how many times? _____
 - If so, how much *total* time have you spent in prison? _____
8. What was the most stressful thing for you to deal with during your first few days in prison (during your first incarceration)? _____
9. How stressful was this for you, on a scale of 1 to 10? (10 being the most stressful) _____
10. What did you do to cope with this stress? _____

11. What is most stressful for you now?

12. How stressful is this for you on a scale of 1 to 10? (10 being the most stressful) _____

13. What do you do to cope with this stress now?

14. Do you feel that the events in your life are mostly the result of ... (pick one only)

_____ your actions?

_____ other people?

_____ fate or luck?

Appendix B

The Carver COPE Scale

CARVER COPING SCALES

Instructions

The following are ways of reacting to various difficult, stressful, or upsetting situations. Please rate each of the following items from 1 to 5 on the blank line. Indicate how much you engage in these types of activities when you encounter a difficult, stressful, or upsetting situation.

<u>NEVER</u>	<u>RARELY</u>	<u>SOME</u> <u>TIMES</u>	<u>OFTEN</u>	<u>ALWAYS</u>
1	2	3	4	5

- ___ 1. I take additional action to try to get rid of the problem.
- ___ 2. I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.
- ___ 3. I put aside other activities in order to concentrate on this.
- ___ 4. I force myself to wait for the right time to do something.
- ___ 5. I ask people who have had similar experiences what they did.
- ___ 6. I talk to someone about how I feel.
- ___ 7. I look for something good in what is happening.
- ___ 8. I learn to live with it.
- ___ 9. I seek God's help.
- ___ 10. I get upset and let my emotions out.
- ___ 11. I refuse to believe that it has happened.
- ___ 12. I give up the attempt to get what I want.
- ___ 13. I turn to work or other substitute activities to take my mind off things.
- ___ 14. I concentrate my efforts on doing something about it.
- ___ 15. I make a plan of action.
- ___ 16. I focus on dealing with this problem, and if necessary let other things slide a little.
- ___ 17. I hold off doing anything about it until the situation permits.
- ___ 18. I try to get advice from someone about what to do.
- ___ 19. I try to get emotional support from friends or relatives.
- ___ 20. I try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.
- ___ 21. I accept that this has happened and that it can't be changed.
- ___ 22. I put my trust in God.
- ___ 23. I let my feelings out.

<u>NEVER</u>	<u>RARELY</u>	<u>SOME TIMES</u>	<u>OFTEN</u>	<u>ALWAYS</u>
1	2	3	4	5

- ___ 24. I pretend that it hasn't really happened.
- ___ 25. I just give up trying to reach my goal.
- ___ 26. I go to movies or watch TV, to think about it less.
- ___ 27. I learn something from the experience.
- ___ 28. I get used to the idea that it happened.
- ___ 29. I try to find comfort in my religion.
- ___ 30. I talk to someone to find out more about the situation.
- ___ 31. I make sure not to make matters worse by acting too soon.
- ___ 32. I keep myself from getting distracted by other thoughts or activities.
- ___ 33. I think hard about what steps to take.
- ___ 34. I do what has to be done, one step at a time.
- ___ 35. I discuss my feelings with someone.
- ___ 36. I act as though it hasn't even happened.
- ___ 37. I reduce the amount of effort I'm putting into solving the problem.
- ___ 38. I daydream about things other than this.
- ___ 39. I take direct action to get around the problem.
- ___ 40. I try to grow as a person as a result of the experience.
- ___ 41. I think about how I might best handle the problem.
- ___ 42. I accept the reality of the fact that it happened.
- ___ 43. I try hard to prevent other things from interfering with my efforts at dealing with this.
- ___ 44. I feel a lot of emotional distress and I find myself expressing those feelings a lot.
- ___ 45. I restrain myself from doing anything too quickly.
- ___ 46. I talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.
- ___ 47. I sleep more than usual.
- ___ 48. I get sympathy and understanding from someone.
- ___ 49. I drink alcohol or take drugs, in order to think about it less.
- ___ 50. I pray more than usual.
- ___ 51. I get upset, and I am really aware of it.
- ___ 52. I say to my self " this isn't real."
- ___ 53. I admit to myself that I can't deal with it, and quit trying.

Appendix C

Qualitative Stressor Categories with Examples

Qualitative Stressor Categories with Examples

1. Separation from loved ones

- a. "Too much time is hurting my family. My husband is 74 and needs me at home to help him."
- b. "The fact that my children are still struggling out there on their own, and that my grandson hardly knows me."
- c. "Having to tell my baby goodbye and I love you at the end of a visit, and I'll see you soon."

2. General prison environment

- a. "Being locked in a room all day."
- b. "No coffee. No smoking"
- c. "Being told when to eat and sleep."

3. Negative prison environment

- a. "Being in a place where the COs can do whatever to you, and nobody will ever know."
- b. "The way our jailers talk down to us."
- c. "The COs dogging you out like you're not human."

4. Ambiguity of situation

- a. "Thinking about what the parole board will do to me next week."
- b. "The fear of not knowing what being in prison was going to be like."
- c. "How I'm going to survive once I'm out."

5. Other inmates

- a. "Doing time with inmates with major attitudes."
- b. "Seeing women with women."
- c. "The pettyness of female prisoners."

Appendix D

Qualitative Coping Strategy Categories with Examples

Qualitative Coping Strategy Categories with Examples

1. Spirituality

- a. "Read my Bible and prayed for the Lord to help me."
- b. "I established a close relationship with God."
- c. "By praying, and also knowing that God won't put you through any more than you can handle."

2. Organized support

- a. "Got into group to better myself."
- b. "I have a therapist that I see on a weekly basis."
- c. "I take special meds."

3. Peer/family support

- a. "Write letters to outside friends and family."
- b. "Keep in touch with family – visits, phone calls, letters."
- c. "I talked to my peers about problems I may have had."

4. Activities

- a. "Keep busy with other things to make my mind be elsewhere, other than thinking of home or family."
- b. "Crochet a lot."
- c. "Making cards."

5. Problem solving

- a. "Study the law in the law library."
- b. "Wrote grievances when necessary."

6. Crying

- a. "I cried a lot with my face in my pillow."

7. Maladaptive coping

- a. "I snap and I'm afraid I'll hit one of them."
- b. "I find myself lashing out at others."
- c. "Had a nervous breakdown and spent almost 2 years on the mental health unit."