Research Report	
An Analysis of Sexual Assaults During	
Hostage-takings and Forcible Confinements	
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Laurier ouest, Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0P9. Should additional copies be required they can be obtained from the Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada, 340 Laurier Ave., West, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0P9.	;

# An Analysis of Sexual Assaults During Hostage-takings and Forcible Confinements

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Fortunately, hostage-takings and forcible confinements are rare phenomena within our institutions. However, when they do occur they cause enormous psychological and/or physical harm to the victims. Past research has attempted to describe the unique static and dynamic characteristics of this group of offenders. Furr (1994), in his review, suggested that an offender who had previously sexually assaulted women staff and/or is sexually sadistic, pervasively angry or psychopathic might be at an increased risk of sexually assaulting a hostage. This applied particularly to rapists. Willams (1995) found that these offenders tended to act alone, take a single victim, were an average age of 35 years. Further, they were described as being either violent or sex offenders, demanding treatment, and serving sentences longer than 6 years. Nouwens (1995) found that: (1) preindicators do not often exist, (2) the offender was appropriately placed, (3) monitoring of the offender was inadequate, and (4) the staff response was adequate.

The present investigation reviewed all 33 hostage-takings/forcible confinements that occurred over an 11-year period (December 1989-December 2000). Generally there was an equal distribution of incidents across 16 institutions with Port Cartier over-represented. The incidents occurred most often in Quebec, the Prairies and Ontario in either medium (13) or maximum (13) security settings.

The investigation team classified the incidents in the reports as follows: 20 hostage-takings (3 with sexual assault) and 13 forcible confinements (7 with sexual assault). Sexual assaults were always against women and 36.6% of the women were sexually assaulted. Notably, 22.5% of offenders sexually assaulted their hostages.

There are a number of static variables that describe offenders who take hostages or forcibly confine *and* sexually assault. First, this is a violent group of offenders with a prior history of sexual and non-sexual violence, in addition to escapes. Index offences were predominantly violent (non-sexual or sexual). Rapists were the most common types of sex offender, while robbery was most common type of violent non-sexual offence. Second, while a quarter of the offenders had a forcible confinement or hostage-

taking in their current conviction, half had a prior history of such incidents. Third, sexual offenders were overwhelmingly implicated in incidents that resulted in a sexual assault against a staff. Fourth, the distribution for age and length of sentence illustrate that most offenders in this study were below the age of 30 and serving sentences less than 10 years.

There were several dynamic pre-indicators. Information from file and investigation reports described them as being demanding and confrontational, primarily towards staff. Some offenders were described as experiencing high levels of stress, although most of the time the source of stress was institutional (e. g. wanting a transfer to the Special Handling Unit (SHU). For others the stress was conflicts with other inmates, family loss, or conflicts with family and staff. Those who committed a sexual assault did not tend to demonstrate obvious or unique pre-indicators. In hindsight, a few were identified as either stalking the subject, writing letters, demonstrating infatuations and/or signs of dependence. These findings suggest training in boundary issues may be useful.

According to the information in the investigation reports, 8 offenders refused treatment, 2 were waiting for treatment and 3 were making specific demands for treatment prior to the incident occurring. The remainder had either completed treatment or was engaged in treatment at the time of the incident. However, many of those in treatment were described as being disruptive or unmotivated. Treatment participation did not differentiate type of incident (hostage-taking or forcible confinement).

Currency (using the hostage as a means to an end) was the primary motivation for three-quarters of the offenders, with sexual motivation for the remainder of the offenders. For those who were motivated by currency, most were demanding an institutional transfer to the SHU.

This research suggests that offenders involved in these types of incidents are not necessarily different from the general population of offenders, and sex offenders in particular. There are, however, some identifiers that may help alert employees to the risk an offender may pose for hostage taking. If the offender has a history of hostage-takings/forcible confinements and/or is presently refusing treatment, staff should be

cautioned to the increased risk this offender may pose. Furthermore, demands for transfers and an angry disposition with staff may be pre-indicators of an imminent hostage taking. A hostage taking is more likely to become sexual if the offender is a known sexual offender, particularly a rapist, and if they have been displaying signs of sexual interest in staff.

This study was limited by the low base rate of incidents, in addition to the nature of information available on OMS and within the investigation reports. Moreover, the results of this study using a larger sample size did not completely replicate Williams' (1995) findings. These limitations are important to consider when attempting to develop screening protocols for hostage-takers, in particular those who commit sexual assaults. These data suggest the potential for incorrectly classifying an offender as high risk (false positive) is likely.

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
METHODOLOGY	3
RESULTS Frequency of incidents Number of offenders Institutional information Type of incidents The Victims The Offenders Static Descriptors Dynamic Descriptors Treatment status Motivations	
DISCUSSION	13
SUMMARY	17
REFERENCES	18
APPENDIX A	19
APPENDIX B	23

# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	Frequency of Incidents From 1989 to 2000	4
Figure 2:	Number of Offenders Involved in All Incidents	5
Figure 3:	Incident Occurrence by Security Level	6
Figure 4:	Number of Offenders by Type of Incident	7
Figure 5:	Victim Employment by Type of Incident	8
Figure 6:	Current Violent Convictions of the Victimizers	10
Figure 7:	Treatment Status of Offenders Involved in Incidents	11
Figure 8:	Currency by Type of Incident	12

#### INTRODUCTION

Hostage-takings and forcible confinements are rare phenomena within our institutions but when they do occur they cause enormous psychological and/or physical harm to the victims. Although we may be unable to predict the occurrence of these incidents with absolute certainty it may be possible to describe the characteristics of hostage-takers/forcible-confiners within certain limits.

Past research, although scarce, has attempted to describe the static and dynamic characteristics of this group of offenders. Furr (1994), a psychologist at Kingston Penitentiary, was the first to theorize about hostage-takings/forcible confinements, formulating several key hypotheses from the literature on sex offenders and his professional observations. He suggested that an offender who had previously sexually assaulted women staff and/or is sexually sadistic, pervasively angry or psychopathic might be at an increased risk of sexually assaulting a hostage. This applied particularly to rapists.

Shortly thereafter, Willams (1995) lead a focus group that reviewed 12 hostage-takings/forcible confinements occurring between 1993 and 1995. The average number of hostage-takings was reported to be 3.9 per year. This group of offenders tended to act alone, take a single victim, was 35 years old and was described as being either violent or sex offenders, demanding of treatment, and serving sentences longer than 6 years. Nouwens (1995) simultaneously found with the same sample that: (1) preindicators do not often exist, (2) the offender was appropriately placed, (3) monitoring of the offender was inadequate, and (4) the staff response was adequate.

The outcome of this early body of research was twofold. First, several screening protocols have been created to facilitate the identification of offenders at high risk to women staff. The Prairie region uses their assessment instrument to determine work placement, whereas the Ontario region used a different

instrument to determine institutional risk. Second, policy has been drafted to facilitate the identification and management of offenders at risk to women staff. Both of these outcomes originated at Kingston Penitentiary and have been proposed as national policy.

The purpose of this research was to respond to the investigation report regarding the incidence of sexual assaults during hostage-taking incidents. In an effort to clarify this issue, the present research investigated hostage-takings/forcible confinements that occurred over an 11-year period (1989-2000). The intent was to validate previous findings with a large sample. Differences between those who do and do not sexually assault their hostages was investigated in addition to the identification of potential dynamic proximal cues. The results of this research are intended to inform policy development and operational practices for hostage-takings/forcible confinements.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

A coding manual was created (see Appendix A) containing items similar to previous research in addition to an expanded list of dynamic cues. The Performance Assurance Sector Supplied 35 investigation reports of which 33 were coded for the purpose of this report. Some information was found by a review on the Offender Management System (OMS). The type of incident was coded according to the manner in which it was described within the investigation report. A hostage taking was defined by the use of the hostage as an instrument for negotiation, whereas the purpose of a forcible confinement was to obtain something directly from the hostage (e.g., money, drugs, or sex). For the purpose of this report the word "incidents" refers to a hostage-taking/forcible confinement with or without a sexual assault.

## **RESULTS**

## Frequency of incidents

In the past 11 years (December 1989 to December 2000) 35 investigation reports were issued. Two of the investigations were omitted as one hostage incident turned out to be a hoax (Feb 4, 1997) and the other was a new sexual offence (without forcible confinement) committed on conditional release (Dec 8, 1997). The remaining 33 investigations are reviewed within this research report. Figure 1 displays the number of incidents per year (mean=3.0).

5 4.5-4-3.5-2-1.5-1-0.5-1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000

Figure 1: Frequency of Incidents From 1989 to 2000

## **Number of offenders**

There were 40 offenders involved in the 33 incidents with an average of 3.6 offenders per year. Figure 2 displays a distribution which appears bimodal (one incident in 1995 involved 5 offenders).

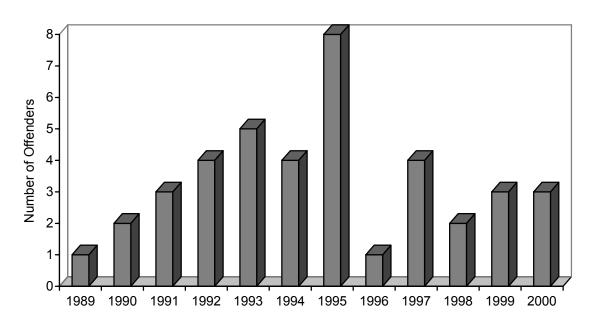
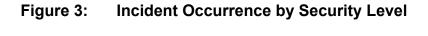


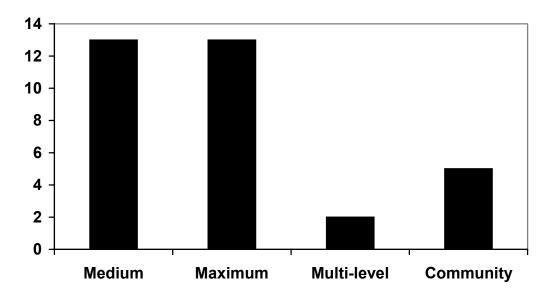
Figure 2: Number of Offenders Involved in All Incidents

## Institutional information

Generally there was an equal distribution of incidents across 16 institutions with Port Cartier over-represented. As a maximum-security institution that houses protective custody inmates with long sentences (mean sentence of 9.4 years), this institution may be more susceptible to hostage-takings/forcible confinements. Edmonton (*n*=3), Warkworth (*n*=3), Drumheller (*n*=2) and KP (*n*=2) were the locations of the next most frequent incidents. All others experienced one incident (Saskatchewan Penn, RPC-SA, Dorchester, Mission, Grande Cache, P4W, Atlantic, Archambault, Drummond, Cowansville, La Macaza).

The incidents occurred equally in Quebec (n=11) and the Prairies (n=11) followed by Ontario (n=7), Pacific (n=2) and Atlantic (n=2). While none of the incidents occurred in a minimum-security setting, they were equally distributed across medium and maximum-security settings (Figure 3).





# Type of incidents

The investigation team classified the incidents in the reports as follows: 20 hostage-takings (3 with sexual assault) and 13 forcible confinements (7 with sexual assault). Overall, 22.5% of offenders sexually assaulted their victims (Figure 4). In almost all incidents there was some degree of planning (92%) and a weapon was used by 89% of offenders. Suicide was attempted in 15% and threatened in 24% of the incidents.

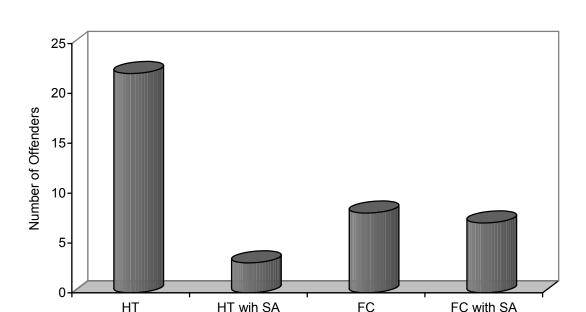
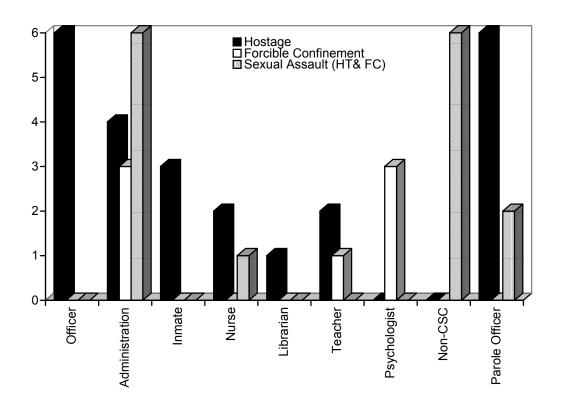


Figure 4: Number of Offenders by Type of Incident

## **The Victims**

There were 46 victims in total of which 16 were men and 30 were women. Sexual assaults were always against women and 36.6% of women were sexually assaulted. In 65% of the incidents there was a single victim and in 20% two victims (the remainder had more than 2 victims). In 35 cases the victims reported no physical injury while in 8 cases the injury was reported to be minor (e.g., superficial cuts) and 19 cases major (e.g., sexual assault). The victims were mostly administrative staff (13), correctional officers (6) and parole officers (8). The remainders were inmates (3), nurses (3), teachers (3), psychologists (3), non-CSC employees (6) and a librarian. Figure 5 displays the victims' employment according to the type of incident.

Figure 5: Victim Employment by Type of Incident



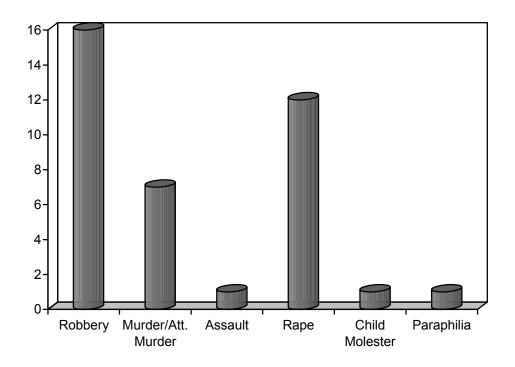
# The Offenders

The following section describes the offenders static and dynamic cues. The specific information sought was often not contained within either the investigation reports or OMS. Missing data limited the ability to generalize to all offenders but provides and understanding of some of the important variables to consider in this population. Furthermore, it should be stressed that the dynamic descriptors are not necessarily orthogonal as offenders present with a myriad of indicators simultaneously.

## Static Descriptors

The offenders were mostly men (n=36; 4 were women) serving an average sentence of 14.5 years (SD=11.3). They were predominantly single (n=21; 8 were common-law, 4 married and 4 divorced) and approximately 30 years of age (SD=8.7). The distributions representing age and length of sentence were skewed to the right illustrating that most of the offenders were below the age of 30 and serving sentences less than 10 years. No differences existed in terms of age and length of sentence between those who did and did not sexually assault their victims. For 25 offenders the index offence was violent non-sexual and for 13 offenders it was sexual (2 offenders had index offences that were nonviolent). One guarter of the offenders had a forcible confinement or hostage-taking conviction in their index offence. Figure 6 illustrates that rapists were the most common types of sex offender, while robbery was most common type of violent non-sexual offence. Sexual offenders were overwhelmingly implicated in incidents that resulted in a sexual assault (90%). This is a violent group of offenders that have a prior history of sexual (38%) and non-sexual violence (82%) in addition to escapes (62%). Most interesting is that half of the offenders had been implicated in a prior incident either in the community or an institution.

Figure 6: Current Violent Convictions of the Victimizers



# **Dynamic Descriptors**

The dynamic variables are more difficult to code as they relied on the questions asked during the investigation . Generally this group did not appear to be psychologically different from the general population of offenders. Most were identified as having antisocial personality disorder and problems with substance abuse while very few had a known mental disability (n=6), such as schizophrenia, depression, and organic brain injuries. They tended to be non-compliant and antiauthoritarian, with some displaying symptoms of depression (n=5), anxiety (n=5) and dysphoria (n=2). The overwhelming majority expressed their anger in the form of hostility, aggressiveness, and frustration. Information described them as being demanding and confrontational, primarily towards staff. Some offenders were described as experiencing high levels of stress, although most of the time the source of stress was institutional. This was described as wanting a transfer to the Special Handling Unit (SHU) but for others was conflicts with other inmates

10

(n=12), family loss (n=2), or conflicts with family (n=2) or staff (n=2). Those who committed a sexual assault did not tend to demonstrate obvious or unique preindicators. In hindsight, a few were identified as either stalking the subject (n=1), writing letters (n=2), demonstrating infatuations (n=5), and/or displaying signs of dependence (n=2).

#### **Treatment status**

Information pertaining to treatment participation was available for 27 of the 40 offenders in this sample. While a few offenders indicated that they were waiting for treatment, only 3 were in fact making specific demands for treatment prior to the incident. While a number of offenders refused treatment (Figure 7), many of those in treatment were described as being disruptive or unmotivated. Treatment participation did not differentiate type of incident.

12-10-8-6-4-2-0-Refused Completed In Progress Waiting Dropped Kicked Out Out

Figure 7: Treatment Status of Offenders Involved in Incidents

# **Motivations**

Currency (using the hostage as a means to an end) was the primary motivation for 72.5% of the offenders and sexual for 22.5% of the offenders (Figure 8). Others were for publicity (2.5%) and frustration (2.5%). For those motivated by currency, most were demanding an institutional transfer to the SHU (n=16). A further 3 wanted drugs, 4 wanted to contact family or friends, 4 wanted medical attention, 1 was angry and 1 wanted institutional change.

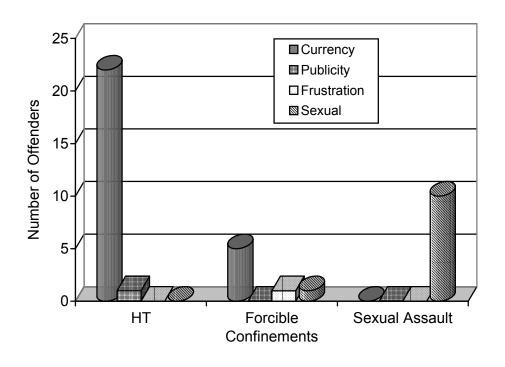


Figure 8: Currency by Type of Incident

#### DISCUSSION

As of December 31, 1999 (CSC, 2000) there were 13,173 offenders incarcerated federally of which 98% are men. Most are in medium-security institutions (61.2%; 12.9% in maximum-security) serving average sentences of 3.9 years. With 68% serving sentences less than 10 years, their convictions are primarily violent (78%). Furthermore, 19% are sex offenders, 36% have a robbery conviction and 0.4% have escaped. Two-thirds of the population are single, 50% are below the age of 34, and 18% have been hospitalized at some point in a mental facility.

Comparing this sample to the general population of offenders, this sample is over-represented by offenders from maximum-security settings with longer average sentences. However, the distribution for sentence length indicates that, much like the general population, the majority was serving sentences less than 10 years. This sample is younger and consisted of proportionately more women. In general this sample was more violent, had more sexual and robbery convictions, and had more escapes. Among the sex offenders, rapists were also over-represented. These characteristics are indicative of offenders who tend to engage in externalizing patterns of behaviour.

These findings have several implications. First, identifying the offenders' motivations provides useful information in determining precursors to the incidents. Thus, it is recommended that in the absence of a psychologist, the director of psychological services and the national manager of sex offender programs should be involved in the development of the protocol for the investigation. For instance, we recognize that sexual gratification as a motive is an oversimplification. A sexual act may be driven by more specific motives such as desire, fantasy fulfillment, revenge, punishment and power to name a few. Failure to explore these and other motivational factors diminishes our ability to intervene in future incidents.

Second, the motivations of hostage-takers described in various documents applied to this sample in a very limited way For instance, the National Correctional Training Program defines five motivations of hostage-takers: escape, change, boredom/attention, psychiatric distress, and sexual assault. While the hostage-takersin this study could be described as motivated to create personal change, the other categories did not apply to the present findings (except sexual assault in those cases that resulted in a sexual assault). Similarly, the Hostage Negotiators Manual (Snider & Bally, undated) describes 4 other motivations: antisocial, inadequate, political terrorist, and mentally disturbed. This sample was no more antisocial, inadequate or mentally disturbed than the general population of offenders while political terrorists were nonexistent. The use of sex offender typology, however, appears to be somewhat effective at identifying hostage-takers that sexually assault. Among sex offenders, rapists were more likely than child molesters or incest offenders to sexually assault hostages. However, reliance on sex offender typology is an oversimplification that would result in the over-classification of sex offenders. Since the current typologies do not fit with the present findings, training programs for officers should be modified to reflect the most recent information on hostage taking typologies. In particular, the training programs should reflect research with offender populations, as this group may be unique in their motivations.

Third, the creation of screening instruments as a result of this and previous research should be done with extreme caution. Large sample sizes and replication is imperative to ensuring that screening instruments correctly identify the target population. Some of the findings in Williams (1995) were replicated in this investigation. For example, most offenders planned the incident to some degree, acted alone, used a weapon, and took a single victim. Further, it was rare that offenders were incarcerated for a non-violent offence and many had a past history of hostage-takings/forcible confinements. Rapists were most often implicated in sexual assaults although the present findings found an even greater proportion than Williams (1995). Unlike the results of Williams (1995), however, this sample was *under* 30, serving sentences *less than* 10 years, was primarily

violent non-sexual offenders, and was infrequently demanding treatment. This suggests that screening instruments created from the results of Williams (1995) are likely over-classifying offenders as high-risk. This may result in an excessive number of offenders unjustifiably living under enhanced security conditions. Future use of these and other instruments for classifying potential hostage-takers should consider the findings of this investigation and exercise extreme caution in their use until future research replicates this and other findings.

Finally, policy and operational practices should reflect the need for intervention strategies that consider the probability of a sexual offence. Although Furr (1994) suggested that "not all sex offenders who take hostages do so for the purpose of committing a sexual assault...(and) not all hostage-takers who commit a sexual assault during a hostage-taking are sex offenders."(p. 6), these results suggest otherwise. Sex offenders, particularly rapists, often sexually assault their hostages. Thus, if a sexual offender has taken a hostage the assumption should be made that a sexual assault is imminent. In this case the current procedure for resolving a hostage taking (stall and negotiate) would inadvertently provide a greater opportunity for the hostage-taker to sexually assault the hostage. Policy must be created to facilitate the ability to act more rapidly when there is reasonable grounds to assume the hostage will be sexually assaulted.

In conclusion, this research suggests that offenders involved in these types of incidents are not necessarily different from the general population of offenders, and sex offenders in particular. There are, however, some identifiers that may help alert employees to the risk an offender may pose for hostage taking. If the offender has a history of hostage-takings/forcible confinements and/or is presently refusing treatment staff should be cautioned to the increased risk this offender may pose. Also, such an offender's movement and work placement within the institution should be monitored closely. Furthermore, demands for transfers in conjunction with an angry disposition with staff may be pre-indicators of an imminent hostage taking. A hostage taking is more likely to become sexual if the offender is a known sexual offender, particularly a rapist, and if they have

been displaying signs of sexual interest in staff. In any situation it is advisable to first determine the offender's background so that the best course of action can be taken to resolve the incident appropriately.

Notwithstanding an effort to be comprehensive, this study was limited by the low base rate of incidents, in addition to the nature of information available on OMS and within the investigation reports. Moreover, the results of this study using a larger sample size did not completely replicate Williams' (1995) findings. These limitations are important to consider when attempting to develop screening protocols for hostage-takers, in particular those who commit sexual assaults. These data suggest the potential for incorrectly classifying an offender as high risk is likely. Using the indicators that identify those who sexually assault their victims is a reasonable start; however, it does not guarantee the accurate prediction of an incident. Future research should investigate further potential dynamic precursors. This information in particular may be useful in the prevention and early intervention process. Policies and operational practices that are created to address the issue of hostage taking should consider these cautions.

## **SUMMARY**

- Low base rates could prevent the accurate prediction of these incidents.
- The differentiation between hostage-takings and forcible confinements may not be relevant to understanding sexually assaultive behaviour. Overall, the prevalence of sexual assault among these incidents is high (22.5%).
- This group is similar to the general population of offenders on several factors:
   length of sentence, marital status, and personal/emotional indices.
- The factors that differentiate this group from the general population of offenders are:
  - ➤ It is a more violent group of offenders with past histories of forcible confinements/hostage-takings and escapes.
  - > Sex offenders and maximum-security offenders are over-represented.
  - They are slightly younger.
  - They are often resistant to treatment.
- Current hostage-taking typologies may not be relevant.
- Motivation for hostage-takings should be investigated, where possible, in greater detail in subsequent investigations.
- If the offender is a sex offender (particularly a rapist) and the hostage is a woman, the present findings suggest the incident should be responded to as a sexual assault rather than a hostage taking.
- The creation of screening instruments should be done with extreme caution due to the high probability of incorrectly classifying an offender as a potential threat.

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## **APPENDIX A**

## Coding Manual Hostage-Taking Study

# **PROFILE**

FPS: OID:

Gender: male women Date of birth: (month/day/year)

Age:

Index offence: Violent Nonviolent Sexual

Describe:

If sexual what type: Rapist Incest Child molester

Other:

Length of current sentence:

Marital status: single married common-law divorced widow

**INCIDENT** 

Region: Atlantic Ontario Prairies Pacific Quebec

Institution: Security level:

Incident /investigation report number:

Incident type:

Hostage-taking HT with SA Forcible confinement Forcible confinement with SA Attempt to commit

Incident date: (month/day/year) Number of offenders involved:

Number of victims:

Victim 1: male women

Victim status: inmate staff visitor

If staff what position:

Physical injury: none minor major

Describe:

Victim 2: male women

Victim status: inmate staff visitor

If staff what position:

Physical injury: none minor major

Describe:

Weapon used: yes no

Describe:

Motivation: currency boredom escape publicity sexual

Frustration anger revenge self-harm

Other:

Planning: planned spontaneous unknown

# **HISTORY**

prior non sexual violent offender: yes no prior sexual offender: yes no Ever taken hostages before: yes no

Incident type: Hostage-taking HT with SA

Forcible confinement FC with SA

Attempt to commit

# of priors:

If yes: community institution

# victims:

Institutional victim status: inmate staff visitor

Victim relationship: stranger acquaintance

injury: none minor major

History of escapes: yes no

# **PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS**

Mental illness: ves no

If yes what type:

Currently on medication:

Sexual indicators: stalking

Writing love letters

Infatuations Dependence

Describe:

Social stressors: Family - conflict

Family-loss Offenders Staff

Describe:

Other stressors: Institutional

Sentence

Drugs Alcohol

Describe:

Suicidal intent: none attempted threatened

Previous suicide attempts: yes no

Substance abuse issues:

Drugs: yes no type:

Alcohol: yes no Mixed: Yes no

unknown

Attitudes: Non-compliant

Anti-authoritarian

Compliant Other:

Overall attitude: Difficulty Some difficulty no difficulty

Mood: Dysphoria

Anxiety Depressed Flat

Overall mood: Difficulty some difficulty no difficulty

Anger: Hostile

Confrontational Aggressive Demanding Frustrated Other:

Anger directed towards: Staff inmates

Risk assessment scores:

LSI: VRAG: PCL-R: Other:

<u>TREATMENT</u>

Current treatment status: refuser completed in progress waiting

dropped out kicked out

Type of current treatment: Treatment recommendations:

Previous treatment taken: yes no

Type:

no

Demands for treatment made: yes Date: (month/day/year) Type of demands:

Motivation for treatment: Refuser

> Non-compliant Enthusiastic Compliant

Treatment participation: Motivated

Participates Disruptive

## **APPENDIX B**

## Incident Dates (Investigation Report Number):

December 19, 1989 (1410-2-147)

January 11, 1990 (1410-2-147)

May 17, 1990 (1410-2-153)

February 10, 1991 (1410-2-182)

February 16, 1991 (1410-2-183)

March 25, 1991 (1410-2-187)

July 4, 1991 (1410-2-182)

March 16, 1992 (1410-2-210)

May 23, 1992 (1992101314)

May 28, 1992 (1410-2-220)

April 24, 1993 (1410-2-243)

May 7, 1993 (1410-2-245)

June 28, 1993 (1410-2-247)

July 11, 1993 (1410-2-250)

September 15, 1993 (1410-2-253)

January 5, 1994 (1410-2-261)

June 15, 1994 (1410-2-270)

October 12, 1994 (1994000137)

November 15, 1994 (1994000249)

September 25, 1995 (1410-2-304)

October 11, 1995 (1410-2-306)

November 3, 1995 (1410-2-308)

February 22, 1996 (1410-2-315)

May 29, 1997 (1410-2-347)

May 29, 1997 (1410-1-350)

June 5, 1997 (1410-2-351)

September 7, 1997 (1410-2-356)

June 18, 1998 (1410-2-371)

November 4, 1998 (1998000817)

May 17, 1999 (1410-2-397)

August 24, 1999 (1410-2-405)

December 13, 1999 (1999002300)

March 14, 2000 (1410-2-414)

July 25, 2000 (1410-2-422)