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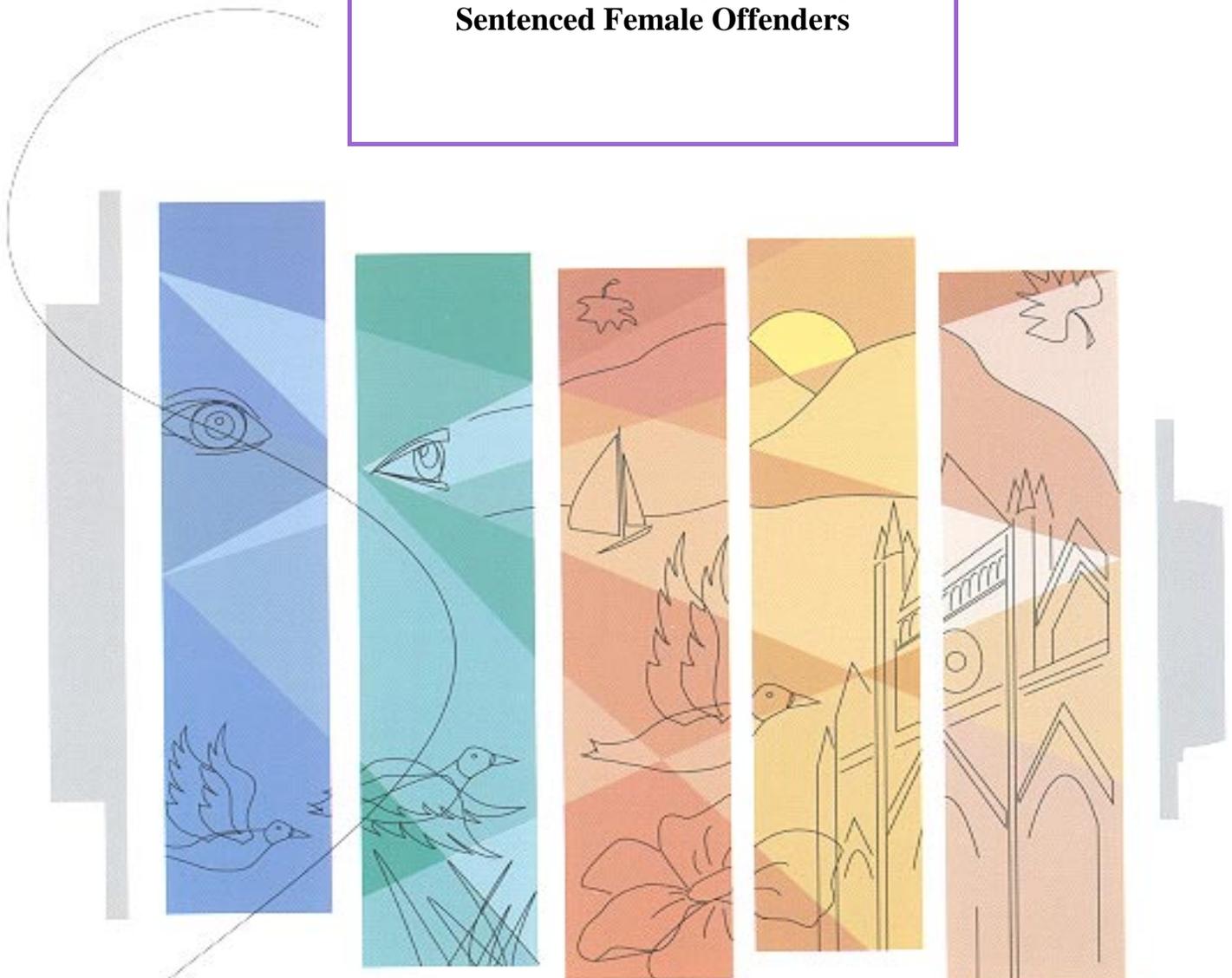Canada   Canada

Research Branch
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**An Examination of Medium – and
Maximum – Security Federally –
Sentenced Female Offenders**

Canada

**AN EXAMINATION OF MEDIUM- AND MAXIMUM-SECURITY
FEDERALLY-SENTENCED FEMALE OFFENDERS**

by

Kelley Blanchette

Research Branch
Correctional Service Canada

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Executive Summary

Formerly in Canada, there was only one federal prison for women. A recent government decision to construct five new federal facilities for women offenders has been realized. As inmates move to reside in these new women's facilities, security classification has become a primary concern. Although the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) has implemented a comprehensive intake assessment process, some argue that the 'maximum-security' designation poses unnecessary restrictions on female offenders.

The present investigation compared female offenders placed in medium-security to their maximum-security counterparts on a variety of criteria: risk (security and escape), criminogenic need, and suicide potential. For the purposes of this study, CSC's automated Offender Management System was used, and all available data for federally-sentenced female offenders was extracted. As of January 14, 1997, data for institutional security level was available for 212 female offenders, and revealed that 34% (72) were designated 'minimum-security', 49% (103) were 'medium-security', and the remaining 17% (37) were 'maximum-security'.

The first set of comparisons focused on demographic information (age, race), which was available for the entire sample. Statistical analyses revealed that the maximum-security female offenders were significantly younger than their medium-security counterparts. For the former, the mean age was 28.7 years, and female offenders in medium-security had a mean age of 34.2. Female offenders in maximum-security were also more likely to be Aboriginal. While only 16% of those in medium-security were Aboriginal, this was the case for 41% of maximum-security women.

Comparisons on overall risk ratings also yielded statistically reliable results, with the majority (56%) of those in medium-security assessed as 'medium' risk, and most (77%) of those in maximum-security assessed as 'high' risk. Regarding their admitting offences, the majority (62%) of female offenders designated 'maximum-security' were serving sentences for violent assaults or robberies. This was true for less than half (46%) of those designated medium-security. Again, these findings were statistically reliable.

Analyses also revealed reliable between-group differences in various criminal history risk criteria. Generally, those women designated 'medium-security' started their criminal careers at a later age than their maximum-security counterparts. Specifically, less than one-third (30%) of those in medium-security had experience in youth court, compared with the majority (54%) of those in maximum-security. While data showed trends for this latter group to have more experience in terms of adult court (community supervision, provincial terms, federal terms), findings were not statistically reliable.

Given the nature of their offences and their criminal history backgrounds, it was not surprising to find that female offenders in maximum-security were also more likely to have previous escapes or 'unlawfully at large' on their records. Moreover, compared to their medium-security counterparts, they were twice as likely to have been placed in segregation for disciplinary reasons. Again,

analyses rendered statistically reliable findings for these between-group differences.

A review of the medium- and maximum-security female offender case need level ratings found reliable differences in five of seven need domains assessed at intake. Maximum-security women were noted to have more difficulties than medium-security women in the following need areas: 'employment', 'marital/family', 'substance abuse', 'community functioning', and 'attitude'. Only for the 'associates' and 'personal/emotional' domains were no significant differences found, though data showed trends in the same direction.

Comparisons across all indicators of suicide potential revealed that maximum-security women are at higher risk for suicide than their medium-security counterparts. Although only about 12% of each group were tagged at admission as "may be suicidal", about 25% of those designated as maximum security had expressed suicidal intent. This was true for only one offender in medium security. This difference was statistically reliable. About 35% of the maximum-security group were exhibiting signs of depression at admission, compared to less than 10% of the medium-security group. Analyses revealed that these latter two differences were statistically reliable. An extremely large proportion (71%) of those in maximum security had previous attempts at suicide, compared with about one-third (42%) of those in medium security. Accordingly, 57% of those designated maximum security had recent psychiatric/ psychological intervention, compared with less than one-third of their medium-security counterparts.

The final set of analyses compared groups on a global risk/need rating that is assessed at admission to federal custody. Results showed that *none* of the maximum-security female offenders were designated 'low' on overall need. A small minority (14%) were assessed as 'medium' need, and the vast majority (86%) were assessed as 'high' need. As a group, medium-security women were assessed as lower need than their maximum-security counterparts. Need levels for this group were: 18% 'low', 39% 'medium', and 43% 'high'.

As with need levels, risk levels were elevated for the maximum-security group. Specifically, the majority (77.2%) were 'high' risk, and the remainder (22.8%) were 'medium' risk. Unlike those in maximum-security, some (17.2%) of the medium-security women were assessed as 'low' risk, most (55.9%) were assessed as 'medium' risk, and the remainder (26.9%) were assessed as 'high' risk. Statistical analyses confirmed that between-group differences in risk/need levels were reliable.

In conclusion, results from the present study demonstrate clear and reliable differences between medium- and maximum-security female offenders. Multiple risk and need variables discriminate between groups, in each case demonstrating more needs and higher risk amongst those in maximum-security. These data suggest a heterogeneity of female offender populations by security designation, and imply that the assignment of security/custody levels is proceeding in an equitable manner, while appropriately managing risk.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

An Examination of Medium- and Maximum Security Federally-sentenced Female Offenders

Prior to 1996, there was only one federal prison for women in Canada. Since that time, five new federal facilities for women offenders have been constructed. As a result, security classification for women has become an important consideration in correctional management.

Offenders who are designated 'maximum-security' are, at least in theory, so-classified because they are assumed or proven to be high risk / violent. However, Shaw and Dubois (1995) noted that "women's violence has been framed largely as a response to an abusive situation or past abusive experiences" (p.5). This notion has propounded a movement to advocate for lower security classifications for women offenders, contending that security/ custody designations for women seem, both traditionally and currently, inappropriately high. However, there is currently little firm empirical evidence to either support or negate this contention. The ramifications of this are important, as security and custody designations affect housing, access to programs, and levels of privilege.

"Accurate inmate classification is critical to the effective management of prisons and prison populations, and to meeting Correctional Service of Canada's legislative and policy mandates" (Luciani, Motiuk, & Nafekh, 1996, p. ii). It is therefore paramount to insure security/ custody levels are commensurate with the risk and need profiles of the offenders so-classified. Specifically, they must be determined equitably and manage risk, while concurrently offering the least restrictive and most humane environment possible for the inmates.

At admission, all Canadian federal offenders undergo a comprehensive and structured assessment process (Offender Intake Assessment; OIA). The OIA, first implemented in 1994, involves the collection and analysis of information pertaining to each offender's criminal, personal, and mental health history, education, substance abuse history, functioning in the community, attitude, and a number of other factors relevant to determining criminal risk and identifying offender needs.

Since its implementation, all completed OIAs have been entered into Correctional Service Canada's automated database; the Offender Management System (OMS). To date, this base includes nearly 6,000 completed offender assessments. As Motiuk (1997) noted, "[t]his new technology could improve release rates by systematically identifying lower risk inmates earlier in their sentence, thereby reducing the costs of incarceration and providing a more humane response to offenders" (p.18).

The OIA process begins with a collection of all relevant information, from (though not limited to): criminal records, police reports, court transcripts, crown briefs, judges' comments, presentence reports, and victim impact statements. In total, the OIA considers over 200 risk and need indicators in its case-specific offender evaluation process. During the admission evaluation, the offender's complete background is considered, including personal characteristics, interpersonal influences, situational determinants and environmental conditions (Motiuk, 1997). This provides a basis for determining each offender's institutional

placement and ensures that security designation is not assigned in an arbitrary

or haphazard manner.

Methodology and Sample

The present investigation compared female offenders placed in medium-security to their maximum-security counterparts on a variety of criteria: risk (security and escape), criminogenic need, and suicide potential. For the purposes of this study, Correctional Service of Canada's automated Offender Management System was used, and all available data for federally-sentenced female offenders was extracted.

The data extraction date was January 14, 1997, and partial data was available for approximately 300 women. Data for institutional security level was available for 212 female offenders, and revealed that 34% (72) were designated 'minimum' security, 49% (103) were 'medium' security, and the remaining 17% (37) were 'maximum' security. It is noteworthy that security designations for federal women offenders are significantly lower than those for their male counterparts (Blanchette & Motiuk, 1997).

Through OMS, the primary source of information was data derived from OIA. As mentioned, the OIA consists of two core components: Criminal Risk Assessment (CRA), and Case Needs Identification and Analysis (CNIA). In addition, a suicide risk potential with nine indicators is included in OIA. These components will be described in more detail later in this report.

Results

A series of statistical analyses focused on comparing medium-security federally-sentenced female offenders to their maximum-security counterparts. Specifically, groups were compared on age and race, criminal history and security risk, seven target need domains with multiple indicators, and suicide risk potential. Demographic information was available for all women, risk/need levels were available for the majority (94%) of the sample, and complete OIA data was only available for 70% and 65% of the medium- and maximum-security female offenders, respectively. Results are presented in the following sections of this report.

Demographic information

The maximum-security female offenders were significantly younger than their medium-security counterparts. For the former, ages ranged from 21 to 45 years old, with a mean age of 28.7 years. Female offenders in medium-security ranged in age from 20 to 63, with a mean age of 34.2. This difference is reliable at p<.001.

Interestingly, female offenders in maximum-security were also more likely to be Aboriginal. Specifically, while only 16% of those in medium-security were Aboriginal, this was the case for a full 41% of maximum-security women. Statistical analyses confirmed that this difference in Aboriginal status is reliable.

Criminal Risk Assessment

Specific information pertaining to past and current offences is provided by the Criminal Risk Assessment component of OIA. This is based primarily on the criminal history record and provides specific information pertaining to past and current offences. Moreover, the criminal profile report may also include additional case-specific information regarding any other pertinent details pertaining to individual risk factors. Based on these data, the OIA provides an overall risk rating for each offender at admission to federal custody.

Overall risk ratings were available for 93 of the medium-security women: the majority of those (56%) were designated as 'medium' risk. An additional 27% were designated 'high' risk, and less than one-fifth (17%) were considered 'low' risk. The vast majority (77%) of female offenders residing in maximum-security were designated as 'high' risk, a minority (23%) were designated as 'medium' risk, and *none* of the female offenders in maximum-security were assessed as 'low' risk. Statistical analyses revealed that these between-group differences in risk rating are highly reliable (p<.001).

Interestingly, about 23% of those in medium-security were serving long sentences (10 years or more), compared with 29% of those in maximum-security. This difference did not approach statistical significance and implies that risk ratings and institutional security designations are *not* applied on the basis of sentence length. In terms of their admitting offences, the majority (62%) of those designated maximum-security were serving sentences for violent assaults or

robberies. This was true for less than half (46%) of those designated medium-security. This difference was statistically reliable at p<.01.

Analyses also revealed reliable between-group differences in various criminal history risk criteria. Generally, those women designated maximum-security started their criminal careers at an earlier age, with over half (54%) of them having experience in youth court. Less than one-third (30%) of those designated 'medium' security had similar exposure. Interestingly, however, no between-groups statistically reliable differences emerged in regards to adult court experience. Percentage distributions for selected criminal history background indicators are located in Table 1.

Table 1

Selected Criminal History Background Indicators of Medium- and Maximum-security Female Offenders

	Medium (n=72)	Maximum (n=24)
*Previous Youth Court ***	*30%*	*54%*
Community Supervision *	16%	41%
Open Custody *	15%	39%
Secure Custody *	15%	39%
Previous Adult Court	*62%*	*79%*
Community Supervision	48%	71%
Provincial Terms	45%	67%
Federal Terms	20%	29%
Total (Youth and/or Adult)	*70%*	*88%*
Previous:		
*Segregation (disciplinary) **	24%	48%
*Escape/UAL **	12%	29%
Failure on Conditional Release	25%	38%
< 6 Mo. Since Last Incarceration	15%	17%

Note 1: Chi-square tests of significance; *p< .05
Note 2: UAL = unlawfully at large.

It is noteworthy that maximum-security designated offenders were twice as likely to have previously been placed in segregation for disciplinary reasons, and had significantly more previous escapes/ UAL than their medium-security counterparts.

Case Need Identification and Analysis

The CNIA component of OIA involves the identification of the offender's criminogenic needs. More specifically, it considers a wide variety of case-specific aspects of the offender's personality and life situation, and data are clustered into seven target domains, with multiple indicators for each: employment (35 indicators), marital/family (31 indicators), associates/ social interaction (11 indicators), substance abuse (29 indicators), community functioning (21 indicators), personal/emotional orientation (46 indicators), and attitude (24 indicators). For a complete listing of all indicators for each target need, see Appendix.

The CNIA is used to rate offenders an each target domain along a four-point continuum. Classifications reflect the degree of need, ranging from "asset to community adjustment" (not applicable to substance abuse and personal/emotional orientation), to "no need for improvement", to "some need for improvement", to "significant need for improvement". These ratings are provided by case management officers, with some room for discretion, after careful consideration of all CNIA indicators, psychological evaluations, behavioural observations, and supplementary assessments. Overall need levels, ranked

along the 4-point continuum, were available for the 94 medium- security and all (37) maximum-security women offenders.

For the present investigation, scores in each of the seven need domains were dichotomized to indicate presence or absence of need for each offender. Percentage distributions, by security level, are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Identified Needs of Medium- and Maximum-security Female Offenders at Admission

Type of Need	Medium (n = 94)	Maximum (n = 37)
Employment **	72.3%	97.2%
Marital/Family *	78.7%	94.4%
Associates	81.9%	86.1%
Substance Abuse *	67.0%	86.1%
Community Functioning *	75.5%	94.4%
Personal/Emotional	92.6%	97.2%
Attitude ***	23.4%	75.0%

Note: Chi-square test of significance; *p< .05; **p<.01; ***p< .001

As indicated in Table 2, both medium- and maximum-security women have difficulties in multiple need areas. However, statistically reliable between-groups differences emerged in five of the seven target domains. Moreover, in each case, the maximum-security women evidenced more need than their medium-security counterparts. This was especially marked in the attitude domain, where the majority of maximum-security women had problems, compared with less than one-quarter of their medium-security counterparts.

Comparisons of indicators were also performed to provide a more precise analysis of the exact nature of the between-group differences within each

domain. As mentioned, data for individual need domain indicators was not available for the whole sample.

Of approximately 200 pairwise comparisons, almost half yielded statistically reliable results. More importantly, in every case but one, the maximum-security women were more likely to have a negative rating on indicator items. While the substance abuse domain had the largest number of indicators that discriminated between groups, the attitude indicators were most robust in their ability to discriminate.

All statistically reliable results of these comparisons are presented in Table 3. It should be noted that while only statistically reliable results are presented in Table 3, *all* between-group comparisons on indicators showed trends for more negative ratings for maximum-security women.

Table 3

A Breakdown of Reliable Need Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake Assessment Process: Medium- and Maximum-security Female Offenders

Employment indicators	Medium (n=72)	Maximum (n=24)
Has less than grade 8 **	13.7%	41.7%
Has less than grade 10 **	35.6%	70.8%
Finds learning difficult ***	15.5%	58.3%
Has concentration problems **	21.1%	50.0%
Has problems with numeracy *	17.1%	39.1%
Has difficulty comprehending instructions *	5.6%	21.7%
Dissatisfied with skill area/trade/profession *	55.6%	83.3%
Unemployed at time of arrest *	78.1%	95.8%
Unemployed 90% or more **	42.5%	79.2%
Unemployed 50% or more *	65.8%	91.7%
Has been fired from a job *	19.4%	0.0%
Marital/Family indicators		
Other relative(s) relations negative during childhood **	23.2%	54.6%
Associates / Social Interaction indicators		
Associates with substance abusers *	64.8%	87.0%
Many criminal acquaintances *	56.3%	82.6%
Mostly criminal friends **	28.6%	60.9%
Resides in a criminogenic area *	30.0%	55.0%
Substance Abuse indicators		
Began drinking at an early age *	38.4%	66.7%
Drinks on a regular basis *	28.6%	52.2%
Has a history of drinking binges **	36.6%	66.7%
Has combined the use of alcohol and drugs *	37.5%	62.5%
Drinks to excess during leisure time *	33.8%	60.9%
Drinks to excess in social situations *	31.9%	60.9%
Drinks to relieve stress *	41.7%	65.2%
Drinking interferes with employment *	19.7%	41.7%
Drinking interferes with marital / family relations **	31.0%	60.9%
Drinking interferes with social relations *	26.8%	52.2%
Drinking interferes with health *	20.8%	43.5%
Began using drugs at an early age **	39.7%	75.0%
Used drugs on a regular basis **	36.1%	66.7%
Has gone on drug-taking sprees **	38.4%	75.0%
Has combined the use of different drugs *	38.9%	62.5%
Uses drugs during leisure time *	43.8%	70.8%
Uses drugs in social situations *	45.2%	73.9%
Uses drugs to relieve stress *	50.7%	79.2%
Drug use interferes with employment ***	22.2%	58.3%
Drug use interferes with marital /family relations *	44.4%	69.6%
Drug use interferes with social relations *	40.3%	65.2%
Drug use interferes with health *	33.3%	60.9%

(Table continued- next page)

(Table 3- continued)

Community Functioning indicators	Medium (n=72)	Maximum (n=24)
Has unstable accommodation *	45.8%	70.8%
Residence is poorly maintained *	12.7%	35.0%
Has no bank account *	53.9%	81.0%
Has no collateral *	68.6%	90.9%
Has problems writing *	4.2%	16.7%
Prior assessment for community functioning *	8.8%	27.3%
Personal /Emotional Orientation indicators		
Family ties are problematic *	45.8%	69.6%
Has difficulties solving interpersonal problems **	54.2%	87.5%
Goal setting is unrealistic **	12.7%	37.5%
Has disregard for others **	18.3%	50.0%
Impulsive *	69.4%	91.7%
Aggressive **	35.2%	70.8%
Copes with stress poorly *	65.3%	91.7%
Poor conflict resolution *	66.7%	91.7%
Manages time poorly ***	9.9%	40.9%
Has low frustration tolerance *	42.3%	66.7%
Hostile **	27.8%	58.3%
Thrill-seeking *	22.9%	50.0%
Not conscientious *	11.4%	29.2%
Manipulative *	27.1%	50.0%
Sexual attitudes are problematic **	4.4%	22.7%
Past program participation *	29.6%	58.3%
Attitude indicators		
Negative towards the law ***	14.1%	54.2%
Negative towards the police ***	11.8%	45.8%
Negative towards the courts **	19.1%	45.8%
Negative towards corrections ***	12.9%	56.5%
Negative towards community supervision ***	6.0%	41.7%
Negative towards rehabilitation ***	1.4%	33.3%
Employment has no value **	5.6%	26.1%
Values substance abuse ***	18.3%	54.2%
Basic life skills have no value *	4.2%	20.8%
Disrespectful of personal belongings *	5.6%	20.8%
Supportive of instrumental violence **	10.0%	37.5%
Lacks direction **	36.6%	70.8%
Non-conforming ***	28.2%	70.8%

Note: Chi-square tests of significance; * p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Eleven of the 35 employment indicators resulted in reliable between-group differences. Results clearly indicate that the medium-security women are more educated and have fewer difficulties with learning than their maximum-security counterparts. Vocational indicators similarly discriminate medium-security women from those classified as maximum-security, with the latter exhibiting more problems. Interestingly, one indicator, "has been fired from a job", describes almost 20% of the medium-security women, but none of the maximum-security women. It should be noted, though, that the majority of maximum-security women had been unemployed over 90% of the time. This was not true of medium-security women, and suggests that those designated as medium-security had more opportunity to be fired from employment.

In the area of marital/family relations, only one of the 31 comparisons yielded reliable between-group differences. This indicator showed that maximum-security women were about twice as likely to have negative relations with relatives (other than parents, siblings) during childhood. While percentage distributions of other need indicators in this domain showed a trend for maximum-security women to have more problems, those results were not statistically reliable. Recall, however, that an overall comparison of medium- to maximum-security women in this need area produced significant findings (see Table 2). This suggests that between-group differences in individual indicators, while not reliable in isolation, have an additive effect to render the overall need area statistically discriminating.

While the majority of both groups were noted to associate with substance abusers and to have many criminal acquaintances, these indicators distinguished between groups by an approximate 25% greater likelihood for maximum-security women. Moreover, it was the maximum-security women who had mostly criminal friends, and who were likely to reside in a criminogenic area. These indicators were endorsed for less than one-third of medium-security offenders, revealing much less need in this area for that group.

Pertaining to substance abuse, twenty-two of the 29 indicators significantly discriminated between groups. In each case, there was higher endorsement of items by maximum-security women. For instance, those in maximum security were almost twice as likely to drink and to use drugs on a regular basis. Moreover, their drinking and drug use more often interfered with various aspects of their lives, such as marital/family relations, social relationships, health, and employment.

Relatedly, community functioning indicators show that maximum-security offenders, relative to their medium-security counterparts, have more needs in this domain. Almost all of the former group have no collateral and no bank account, and over 70% were found to have had unstable accommodation prior to admission. Also, while about one-third of those designated as maximum security had prior assessments for community functioning, this was true for less than 10% of their medium-security counterparts.

Well over half of those women designated as maximum security were characterized at admission as: hostile, manipulative, thrill-seeking, aggressive,

and having low frustration tolerance and/or disregard for others. Percentage distributions showed this to be true for between 18 and 35% of those in medium security. Coping strategies were also problematic for maximum-security women, who had significantly more needs in areas such as coping with stress, conflict resolution, and time management.

Indicators in the attitude domain were most robust in their ability to distinguish between groups. About half of those women designated maximum security had negative attitudes towards: the law, police, the courts, corrections, community supervision, and rehabilitation. Conversely, this was only true for about 10 to 15% of those in medium security. Maximum-security female offenders were also more likely to view basic life skills and employment as having no value, and over half of them were seen to value substance abuse. This was true for less than one-fifth of their medium-security counterparts, and serves to reinforce other findings within the domains of employment and substance abuse.

Suicide Risk Potential

The nine indicators of suicide potential, as assessed by OIA include: 1) is under the influence of alcohol or drugs <u>or</u> showing signs of withdrawal, 2) showing signs of depression, 3) has expressed suicide intent, 4) has plans for suicide, 5) may be suicidal, 6) has previous attempts at suicide, 7) has had recent psychiatric/psychological intervention, 8) has had recent loss of relationship or death of close relative, and 9) excessively worried about problems.

Comparisons across all indicators of suicide potential revealed that maximum-security women are at higher risk for suicide than their medium-security counterparts. Although only about 12% of each group were tagged at admission as "may be suicidal", about 25% of those designated as maximum security had expressed suicidal intent. This was true for only one offender in medium security. This difference was statistically reliable at p<.001. About 35% of the maximum-security group were exhibiting signs of depression at admission, compared to less than 10% of the medium-security group. Analyses revealed that this difference was statistically reliable at p<.01.

An extremely large proportion (71%) of those in maximum security had previous attempts at suicide, compared with about one-third (42%) of those in medium security (p<.05). Accordingly, 57% of those designated maximum security had recent psychiatric/ psychological intervention, compared with less than one-third of their medium-security counterparts (p<.05).

Although comparisons revealed a tendency for maximum-security women to show more suicide potential than their medium-security counterparts across the remaining four indicators, differences were not statistically reliable.

Risk/Need Levels

At admission, global ratings of case needs (either 'low', 'medium', or 'high') are obtained for each offender. As with the criminal risk assessment (global risk level), results showed that none of the maximum-security women were designated as 'low' on overall need. A minority (14%) were designated as 'medium' need, and most (86%) were designated 'high' need.

As a group, medium-security offenders were designated as lower need than their maximum-security counterparts. Need ratings for this group were: 18% 'low', 39% 'medium', and 43% 'high'.

As mentioned at the beginning of the present report, Offender Intake Assessment considers a composite of risk and need for a variety of criteria such as institutional placement, correctional management, and supervision. Table 4 provides a percentage distribution of composite risk/need levels for medium- and maximum-security women offenders in this sample.

Table 4

Percentage Distribution of Risk/Need Levels at Time of Admission

RISK/NEED LEVEL:	Medium-security female offenders		Maximum-security female offenders	
	(93)	%	(35)	%
Low-risk/Low-need	11	11.8%	0	0.0%
Low-risk/Medium-need	5	5.4%	0	0.0%
Low-risk/High-need	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Sub-total	*16*	*17.2%*	*0*	*0.0%*
Medium-risk/Low-need	5	5.4%	0	0.0%
Medium-risk/Medium-need	23	24.7%	4	11.4%
Medium-risk/High-need	24	25.8%	4	11.4%
Sub-total	*52*	*55.9%*	*8*	*22.8%*
High-risk/Low-need	1	1.1%	0	0.0%
High-risk/Medium-need	8	8.6%	1	2.9%
High-risk/High-need	16	17.2%	26	74.3%
Sub-total	*25*	*26.9%*	*62*	*77.2%*

Note: p< .001

As indicated in Table 4, an overwhelming majority of female offenders designated maximum-security are assigned ratings of 'high' on both risk and need. However, medium-security female offenders cluster mainly in the 'medium' risk range, with either 'medium' or 'high' needs. These data are commensurate with findings presented previously in 'Criminal Risk Assessment' and 'Case Needs Identification and Analysis' sections.

Conclusions

The impetus for the present investigation was a previous study comparing maximum-security female offenders to their maximum-security male counterparts (Blanchette & Motiuk, 1997). Results of the female-to-male comparisons revealed high risk/ high need profiles of maximum-security offenders of *both* genders. More specifically, between-gender comparisons of maximum-security offenders produced few statistically reliable differences. In contrast, the present investigation revealed many statistically reliable differences between groups on risk and need variables, which demonstrates the heterogeneity of female offender groups by security designation.

Results of the present investigation have demonstrated increased risk among maximum-security female offenders, relative to their medium-security counterparts. This was particularly evident in the areas of youth court experience, poor institutional adjustment (segregation for disciplinary reasons, suicide potential), and escape risk. The between-groups differences in indicators of suicide potential may have implications for women offenders in particular: self-injury has been linked to both general and violent recidivism in female offenders (Bonta, Pang, & Wallace-Capretta, 1995; Blanchette & Motiuk, 1995).

Although the majority of the female federal offenders have many needs in multiple domains, the maximum-security group had significantly more needs and higher overall need levels. Statistically reliable differences were noted in overall need levels in five of the seven target domains.

Analysis of need indicators revealed particularly large between-group differences in the 'attitude' domain indicators. About half of those women designated maximum-security had negative attitudes towards: the law, police, the courts, corrections, community supervision, and rehabilitation. Conversely, this was true for very few of those in medium security. The importance of this finding is noted in past research where antisocial attitudes have strong links to criminal behaviour (Andrews & Bonta, 1994).

Analyses also demonstrated discriminatory power by multiple indicators within the substance abuse target domain. Drug and alcohol problems were clearly more prevalent and more serious amongst female offenders in maximum-security. This is significant in that substance abuse has been associated with poor halfway house adjustment (Mocyzydlowski, 1980) and with recidivism (Lambert & Madden, 1975). These results highlight the urgency for intensive, structured substance abuse programming for female federal offenders, especially those designated maximum-security.

Results that show no reliable between-group differences also have important connotations. For instance, there were no significant differences in adult court experience or in sentence length. It is also noteworthy that the personal/emotional domain contains several indicators that tap into emotional stability/ mental health (see Appendix). No reliable between-groups differences emerged in any of these variables. This suggests that security designation is not imposed by consideration of these variables in isolation. Another implication is that the 'maximum' security designation is *not* being used as a method to deal

with illness in a system that is overburdened by mental health needs (Blanchette, 1996).

Although some minor methodological problems (small cell sizes, high item endorsement) suggest caution in interpreting the results of the present study, it serves to highlight some basic differences between those women who are designated 'maximum-security', and those designated 'medium-security'. Analyses in the present study have demonstrated diversity between groups, with results suggesting higher risk/needs profiles for those in maximum security.

It is paramount to reiterate that the OIA is a comprehensive, structured process that considers a large variety of factors for security placement. Moreover, global risk/need ratings are based on composites rather than single-variable scores. Thus, percentage distributions of these global risk/need ratings show between-group divergence and suggest that the service is meeting its goal of assigning security classification in an equitable manner, while appropriately managing risk.

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Appendix

Listing of Education / Employment Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake
Assessment Process

1) Has less than grade 8
2) Has less than grade 10
3) Has no high school diploma
4) Finds learning difficult
5) Has learning disabilities
6) Has physical problems which interfere with learning
7) Has memory problems
8) Has concentration problems
9) Has problems with reading
10) Has problems writing
11) Has problems with numeracy
12) Has difficulty comprehending instructions
13) Lacks a skill area/trade/profession
14) Dissatisfied with skill area/trade/profession
15) Has physical problems that interfere with work
16) Unemployed at time of arrest
17) Unemployed 90% or more
18) Unemployed 50% or more
19) Has an unstable job history
20) Often shows up late for work
21) Has poor attendance record
22) No employment history
23) Has difficulty meeting workload requirements
24) Lacks initiative
25) Has quit a job without another
26) Has been laid off from work
27) Has been fired from a job
28) Salary has been insufficient
29) Lacks employment benefits
30) Jobs lack security
31) Has difficulty with co-workers
32) Has difficulty with supervisors
33) Prior vocational assessment(s)
34) Has participated in employment programs
35) Completed an occupational development program

Listing of Marital / Family Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake
Assessment Process

1) Childhood lacked family ties
2) Mother absent during childhood
3) Maternal relations negative as a child
4) Father absent during childhood
5) Paternal relations negative as a child
6) Parents relationship dysfunctional during childhood
7) Spousal abuse during childhood
8) Sibling relations negative during childhood
9) Other relative(s) relations negative during childhood
10) Family members involved in crime
11) Currently single
12) Has been married/common law in the past
13) Dissatisfied with current relationship
14) Money problems affect relationship(s) past/present
15) Sexual problems affect relationship(s) past/present
16) Communication problems affects the relationship(s)
17) Has been a victim of spousal abuse
18) Has been a perpetrator of spousal abuse
19) Has no parenting responsibilities
20) Unable to handle parenting responsibilities
21) Unable to control the child's behaviour appropriately
22) Perceives self as unable to control the child's behaviour
23) Supervises child improperly
24) Does not participate in activities with the child
25) Lacks an understanding of child development
26) Family is unable to get along as a unit
27) Has been arrested for child abuse
28) Has been arrested for incest
29) Prior marital/family assessment(s)
30) Has participated in marital/family therapy
31) Has completed a marital/family intervention program

Listing of Associates / Social Interaction Indicators as Assessed by the Offender
Intake Assessment Process

1) Socially Isolated
2) Associates with substance abusers
3) Many criminal acquaintances
4) Mostly criminal friends
5) Has been affiliated with a gang
6) Resides in a criminogenic area
7) Unattached to any community groups
8) Relations are described as predatory
9) Often victimized in social relations
10) Easily influenced by others
11) Has difficulty communicating with others

Listing of Substance Abuse Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake
Assessment Process

1) Abuses alcohol
2) Began drinking at an early age
3) Drinks on a regular basis
4) Has a history of drinking binges
5) Has combined the use of alcohol and drugs
6) Drinks to excess during leisure time
7) Drinks to excess in social situations
8) Drinks to relieve stress
9) Drinking interferes with employment
10) Drinking interferes with marital / family relations
11) Drinking interferes with social relations
12) Drinking has resulted in law violations
13) Drinking interferes with health
14) Abuses drugs
15) Began using drugs at an early age
16) Used drugs on a regular basis
17) Has gone on drug-taking sprees
18) Has combined the use of different drugs
19) Uses drugs during leisure time
20) Uses drugs in social situations
21) Uses drugs to relieve stress
22) Drug use interferes with employment
23) Drug use interferes with marital / family relations
24) Drug use interferes with social relations
25) Drug use has resulted in law violations
26) Drug use interferes with health
27) Prior substance abuse assessments
28) Has participated in substance abuse treatment
29) Has completed substance abuse treatment

Listing of Community Functioning Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake
Assessment Process

1) Has unstable accommodation
2) Residence is poorly maintained
3) Has poor self-presentation
4) Has poor hygiene
5) Has physical problems
6) Had dental problems
7) Has dietary problems
8) Difficulty meeting bill payments
9) Has outstanding debts
10) Has no bank account
11) Has no credit
12) Has no collateral
13) Has problems writing
14) Unable to express self verbally
15) Has no hobbies
16) Does not participate in organized activities
17) Unaware of social services
18) Has used social assistance
19) Prior assessment for community functioning
20) Has participated in a community skills program
21) Has completed a community skills program

Listing of Personal / Emotional Orientation Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake Assessment Process

1) Feels especially self-important
2) Physical prowess problematic
3) Family ties are problematic
4) Ethnicity is problematic
5) Religion is problematic
6) Gang member
7) Unable to recognize problem areas
8) Has difficulties solving interpersonal problems
9) Unable to generate choices
10) Unaware of consequences
11) Goal setting is unrealistic
12) Has disregard for others
13) Socially unaware
14) Impulsive
15) Incapable of understanding the feelings of others
16) Narrow and rigid thinking
17) Aggressive
18) Assertion problem
19) Copes with stress poorly
20) Poor conflict resolution
21) Manages time poorly
22) Gambling is problematic
23) Has low frustration tolerance
24) Hostile
25) Worries unreasonably
26) Takes risks inappropriately
27) Thrill-seeking
28) Non-reflective
29) Not conscientious
30) Manipulative
31) Has difficulty performing sexually
32) Sexual identity problem
33) Inappropriate sexual preference(s)
34) Sexual attitudes are problematic
35) Low mental functioning
36) Diagnosed as disordered in the past
37) Diagnosed as disordered currently
38) Prior personal / emotional assessments
39) Prescribed medication in the past
40) Prescribed medication currently

41) Past hospitalization
42) Current hospitalization
43) Received outpatient services in the past
44) Received outpatient services prior to admission
45) Past program participation
46) Current program participation

Listing of Attitude Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake
Assessment Process

1) Negative towards the law
2) Negative towards the police
3) Negative towards the courts
4) Negative towards corrections
5) Negative towards community supervision
6) Negative towards rehabilitation
7) Employment has no value
8) Marital / family relations have no value
9) Interpersonal relations have no value
10) Values substance abuse
11) Basic life skills have no value
12) Personal / emotional stability has no value
13) Elderly have no value
14) Women / men roles are unequal
15) Ethnically intolerant
16) Intolerant of other religions
17) Intolerant of disabled persons
18) Disrespectful of personal belongings
19) Disrespectful of public property
20) Disrespectful of commercial property
21) Supportive of domestic violence
22) Supportive of instrumental violence
23) Lacks direction
24) Non-conforming