

FORUM

ON CORRECTIONS RESEARCH

September 1999, Volume 11, Number 3

Featured issues

Women
offenders

Profiles

Interventions

Perspectives



Correctional Service
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FORUM ON CORRECTIONS RESEARCH is published three times a year in both English and French for the staff and management of the Correctional Service of Canada and the international corrections community.

FORUM reviews applied research related to corrections policy, programming and management issues. It also features original articles contributed by staff of the Correctional Service of Canada and other correctional researchers and practitioners.

FORUM is prepared and published by the Research Branch of the Correctional Service of Canada.

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Typesetting and Layout: Accurate
Printing: CORCAN

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FORUM

on Corrections Research

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Effective corrections for women offenders

by Nancy L. Stableforth¹

Deputy Commissioner for Women, Women Offender Sector, Correctional Service of Canada

The past decade has ushered in a new philosophy of women's corrections: 1990 is the year that the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women made its recommendations to the Correctional Service of Canada. At that time, the incarcerated federal women offender population numbered about 240. More than half of these women were accommodated in provincial institutions under Exchange of Services agreements; the rest were at Prison for Women (PFW) in Kingston, Ontario.

PFW was built in 1934 as the first federal institution for women. Almost from its opening, it has been criticized as unsuitable (i.e., lack of programming options) and over-secure. In the late 1980s, Commissioner Ole Ingstrup was determined to address these long outstanding issues and initiated the creation of a task force. This task force was mandated to develop a comprehensive strategy for the management of federally sentenced women.

Its report, *Creating Choices*,² is the basis for our current regime for women offenders.

Task force recommendations

The task force recommended the development of a holistic approach to corrections for women using five guiding principles:

- 1 **Empowerment** — the process through which women gain insight into their situation, identify their strengths, and are supported and challenged to take positive action to gain greater control of their lives.
- 2 **Meaningful and responsible choices** — women need options that allow them to make responsible choices that relate to their needs, experiences, culture, values, spirituality, abilities and skills.
- 3 **Respect and dignity** — mutual respect is needed among offenders, among staff and between the two groups.
- 4 **Supportive environment** — the quality of an environment can promote physical and psychological health and personal development.

- 5 **Shared responsibility** — all levels of government, corrections, volunteer organizations, businesses, private sector services and the community have a role to play in the development of support systems and continuity of service for federally sentenced women.

These principles were the driving force for specific recommendations to:

- replace PFW with four regional facilities and an Aboriginal healing lodge;
- construct these regional facilities using a community-living model, where the women offenders would live in houses and be responsible for their daily living (e.g., meals, laundry, cleaning, leisure time);
- develop women-centred programs, including survivors-of-abuse programming and mother-child programming; and
- establish an effective community strategy for women offenders that would include a range of community residential options for women.

In 1990, these task force recommendations represented a

new definition of effective corrections for women offenders, reached through consensus by a broad range of correctional practitioners, government agencies and non-governmental organizations.

The task force based this definition on the results of a consultation process and research findings. The research was largely qualitative and included surveys of staff and women offenders, as well as comprehensive literature reviews. It was the first time in the Service's history that the voices of women offenders were given such weight in the development of strategic policy direction.

The task force recommended the development of a holistic approach to corrections for women.

What has happened since 1990?

The opening of the last new facility for women in 1997 exemplifies the Service's commitment to make the task force recommendations a reality. While there is, and will continue to be, debate as to how well the Service has interpreted the recommendations of the task force, the Service has operationalized a fundamentally different concept of effective corrections for women offenders in the federal system.

The Service has five new facilities, one of which is dedicated both in design and operation to Aboriginal healing; a small number of women with special needs remain at PFW. The majority of women offenders are living in house-style accommodation without 24-hour staff presence. They have more choices in daily living and more responsibility, and the regional facilities' model has shown it is effective from a security and public safety perspective for the majority of women offenders. The women have demonstrated that they can manage their daily living and resolve conflicts constructively. Their living environment is healthier and more pleasant than cell-block, self-contained institutions.

The volunteer and mentoring expertise at the regional facilities is extensive and active. Women offenders have benefited from some innovative programs and services during this intensive transition — examples include the canine training program at Nova Institution and the Reintegration Centre at Edmonton Institution for Women. The mother-child program has been implemented. Several women offenders have had their infants reside with them at their respective facilities. Most important, the Service has a women offender program strategy in place, although, accommodation pressures still exist at some institutions. The strategy has provided an opportunity for women offenders to participate in, and benefit from, programs that were developed specifically to meet their needs and styles of learning.

The opening of the last new facility for women in 1997 exemplifies the Service's commitment to make the task force recommendations a reality.

The regionalization of the population has not affected release patterns. Our data show that the Service currently has about 350 women incarcerated and 490 under community supervision. This is a much better balance than what has been achieved to date for male offenders.³ However, we have also been faced with the growing realization that we need to re-assess the needs of a small portion of our female population,⁴ and develop a different range of strategies.

In early 1996, a series of events occurred at Edmonton Institution for Women and the resulting review and investigations highlighted a number of concerns. PFW had to deal with suicides, self-injurious behaviour and special needs. Staff at Nova Institution were challenged to manage women with significant mental health problems, as well as behavioural issues that taxed the new facilities' resources.

In retrospect, it should not have been a surprise that the one model didn't fit all and was not effective for all women offenders. Clearly, women offenders are no more of a homogeneous group than any other population grouping based on a broad definition, whether the defining criterion is offender, ethnicity, gender, age, etc. The challenge of the report recommendations was to find appropriate alternative strategies for this heterogeneous group.

Maximum-security women offenders

In 1996, the Service decided to create separate maximum-security units for women within designated male facilities. This decision was accompanied by a commitment to develop a long-term strategy for maximum-security women. This commitment has resulted in a flurry of research and program activities to support the development of a comprehensive strategy.

Researchers and practitioners agree on the importance of using multi-dimensional approaches. The Service, in turn, has carried out empirical research on offender needs; has

done individual case analysis and assessment; has done qualitative research; has interviewed and listened to women offenders and staff, and has consulted with community partners and external experts.

The research supporting the development of a long-term strategy for the maximum-security women is intended to ensure that this strategy is as effective for these women as the community-living model has proven to be for the majority of women offenders. Some of the research is being done externally and independently. The Service is not funding this research, but is facilitating it through cooperation and support by providing access to data, offenders and staff.

Evaluation and research

The results of program evaluation projects have contributed to our overall program strategy, and have been invaluable in testing research methodologies appropriate for women offenders. In particular, recent program evaluations⁵ for women offenders have been responsive to the small numbers of program participants and their views, and have addressed structural or environmental issues such as management support for the program.

It must be acknowledged that the Service has just begun the required sustained research into the existing model of women's corrections to support the current women offenders' strategy. The research is necessary to demonstrate to what extent this strategy is effective or lacking. For instance, there are respected and well-

known researchers who believe that the criminogenic needs of women offenders is a concept that requires further investigation; that the parameters of effective programs for women offenders have yet to receive basic validation; that women's pathways to crime have not received sufficient research attention; and that methodologies appropriate for women offender research must be specifically developed and selected to be responsive not only to gender issues, but also to the reality of the small number of women. Thus, if we are to solidly demonstrate what is "effective corrections" for women offenders, the research must be broadened. Finally, it is paramount that we use a multi-disciplinary approach in prospective research endeavours.

Conclusion

Not only are there the usual research issues to contend with regarding women offenders (i.e., appropriate methodology, dispersed population, contextual framework), but there are also broader environmental factors at play. For example, women offender issues are often situated in a highly visible context and are embraced within the general debate on gender, race and class. Several investigators have stated the need to explore these issues further in our research.⁶ It is imperative that individuals in every domain — academics, practitioners, government officials, community partners and advocacy groups — continue to make a contribution to effective and humane corrections for women. ■

¹ 340 Laurier Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9.

² Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, *Creating Choices: Report on the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women* (Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada, 1990).

³ Data show that as of April 1999, about 12,700 male offenders were incarcerated and 9,200 were on conditional release. Thus, the ratio of those incarcerated to those under supervision is much higher for men (unpublished raw data, Research Branch).

⁴ This refers to women designated as maximum-security, who make up less than 10% of the incarcerated federal female offender population.

⁵ K. Blanchette and G. Eljdupovic-Guzina, *Results of a Pilot Study of the Peer Support Program for Women Offenders*, (Ottawa, ON: Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada, 1998).

⁶ C. G. Coll, J. B. Miller, J. P. Fields, and B. Matthews, "The experiences of women in prison: Implications for services and prevention," *Women and Therapy: A Feminist Quarterly*, 20, 4 (1998): 11-28.

The processing of adult females through the police and court stages of the Canadian criminal justice system

by Colleen Anne Dell and Roger Boe¹
Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada

Adult females in the Canadian criminal justice system have come under increased scrutiny in Canada during the past decade. This scrutiny was spurred by the report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women,² which facilitated the decentralization of the federal female inmate population from one institution to five regional ones. Incarceration, however, represents only the final stage of the Canadian criminal justice process. This article focuses on trends in the police and criminal court stages which, in turn, affect federal female incarceration rates in Canada.

The Canadian criminal justice system can be viewed as a series of successive stages through which an offender passes before reaching incarceration. The primary stages of this process are:

- (1) a criminal act is committed;
- (2) the police respond to the incident/charge laid;
- (3) a criminal court trial is initiated;
- (4) the trial results in a conviction; and

The Canadian criminal justice system can be viewed as a series of successive stages through which an offender passes before reaching incarceration.

(5) the conviction leads to incarceration.³

This article examines the flow of adult female offenders through the police and court stages on the national level (see Diagram A).⁴ It analyzes the 1992 to 1996 annual Uniform Crime Reports and the 1994-95 to 1996-97 annual Adult Criminal Court data. The Adult Criminal Court survey collects data on a fiscal-year basis (e.g., from April 1 to March 31) whereas the Uniform Crime Report survey collects information for a calendar year.

Federal criminal justice policy makers could use these findings to identify trends in matching offence type to programming requirements and trends in court dispositions,

which would help them forecast federal incarceration rates.

1. Police Stage, 1992-1996

A. Adult females charged by police⁵

In the five years examined here, there has been a decrease in the rate of adult females charged by police per 10,000 adult female population. The rate decreased from 85.5 per 10,000 in 1992 to 66.0 in 1996.

By offence category, property crime rates decreased from 43.2 to 31.0 per 10,000 adult female population and the rates for other crimes decreased from 23.8 to 18.2. Drug offence rates and violent crime rates showed a slight decrease, from 5.4 to 4.5 and from 13.1 to 12.3 respectively (see Figure 1).

By violent offence type, the rate for homicide and related offences⁶ remained stable at a low rate (approximately 0.05 per 10,000

Diagram A

Processing of Adult Females Through the Criminal Justice System in Canada, 1996-1997⁹ A Criminal Act is Committed

Adult Females Charged by Police, Canada, 1996
Actual number: 76,573
66.0 per 10,000 adult female population¹⁰

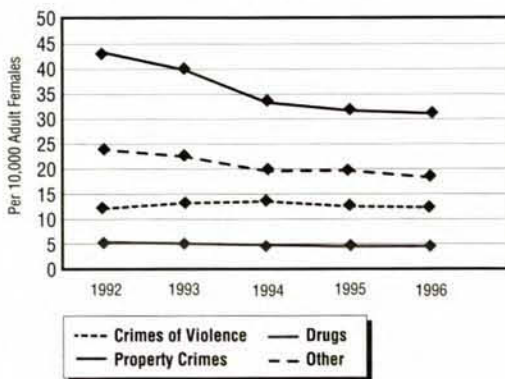
Adult Females Tried in Provincial Criminal Courts,¹¹ Canada, 1996-97
Actual number: 54,421
58.2 per 10,000 adult female population

Disposition of Adult Females Found Guilty,¹² Canada, 1996-97

Prison:	Other: ¹³
Actual number: 7,613 (22%) (or 14% of adult females tried)	Actual number: 26,770 (78%) (or 49% of adult females tried)

Figure 1

Adult Females Charged by Police per 10,000 Adult Female Population, Canada



adult female population) from 1992 to 1996. There was an overall decrease in robbery (from 0.65 to 0.55), and a slight decrease in both attempted murder (from 0.09 to 0.06), and abduction (from 0.08 to 0.06). The sexual assault and other sexual offences charge rate also declined (from 0.21 to 0.16), and — with the exception of 1994 — non-sexual assault declined slightly (from 1.2 to 1.1).

2. Adult Criminal Court Stage, 1994-95 to 1996-97

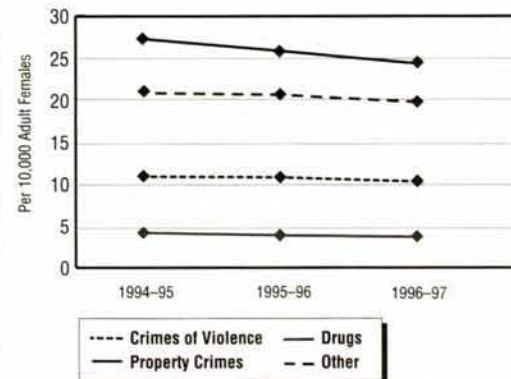
A. Adult females processed through the court system⁷

The annual collection of Adult Court Survey statistics began in 1994-95, which limits the period of comparison between police and court information. At the national level over this period, the rate of adult females processed through the court system per 10,000 adult female population has decreased slightly from 63.3 to 58.2.

The trend by offence type shows a decrease in the rates of property crimes processed (from 27.3 to 24.4), and a slight decrease in the rate of violent crimes processed (from 10.9 to 10.3). There was also a slight decrease in the rate for drug offences (from 4.2 to 3.7) and for other crimes processed (from 20.9 to 19.8) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Adult Females Processed Through the Court System per 10,000 Adult Female Population, Canada



Focusing on specific violent offences, per 10,000 adult female population, the rates for homicide and related offences remained relatively stable (average about 0.05), as did the rates for attempted murder (average 0.04), abduction (average 0.06), and robbery (average 0.34). There was a decrease in sexual assault and other sex offences (from 0.15 to 0.10) and major and common assault (from 1.02 to 0.97).

B. Court dispositions of adult females⁸

At the national level, the number of female court dispositions decreased from 36,058 in 1994-95 to 34,383 in 1996-97.

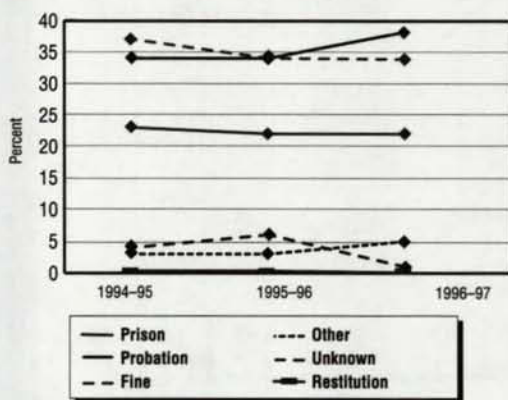
With regard to the different dispositions recorded between 1994-95 and 1996-97, the proportion of prison dispositions decreased slightly (from 23% to 22%), while probation dispositions increased (from 34% to 38%) and fine dispositions decreased (from 37% to 34%). Restitution orders

remained relatively stable at an average of 0.08%, other dispositions increased from 3% to 5%, and the proportion of unknown dispositions decreased (from 4% to 1%) (see Figure 3).

In the five years examined here, there has been a decrease in the rate of adult females charged by police per 10,000 adult female population.

Figure 3

Percentage of Adult Female Dispositions Per Total Adult Female Dispositions, Canada



- ¹ 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9.
- ² The mandate of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women was to examine "the correctional management of federally sentenced women from the commencement of sentence to the date of warrant expiry and to develop a plan...[to]...guide and direct this process in a manner...responsive to the unique and special needs of this group" (Creating Choices, 1990:1).
- ³ L. B. Deutschmann, *Deviance and Social Control*, 2nd Edition (Toronto: ITP Nelson, 1998).
- ⁴ For regional rates refer to C.A. Dell and R. Boe, research brief B-21, *Adult Female Offenders in Canada: Recent Trends* (Correctional Service Canada, 1998).
- ⁵ Source: *Uniform Crime Report*.
- ⁶ Homicide and related offences include the Criminal Code offences of first-degree murder, second-degree murder, manslaughter and infanticide.
- ⁷ Source: *Adult Criminal Court Survey*.

Discussion

Analysis of the police and court data during this recent but relatively short period has revealed several findings that may interest federal criminal justice workers. The actual number of police charge rates and female court dispositions has decreased. Of greater interest to the federal correctional system is the slight decrease in prison dispositions and an increase in probation and other dispositions. Restitution orders have remained a very small proportion of all adult female dispositions. ■

- ⁸ Source: *Adult Criminal Court Survey*.
- ⁹ As noted earlier, data for the Adult Criminal Court Survey are collected by fiscal year while Uniform Crime Report data are collected by calendar year. Caution must therefore be made in comparing the data across police and court sectors. As well, the population estimates (from Statistics Canada) are for July 1 of the indicated years.
- ¹⁰ Rate per 10,000 total adult (aged 18 years and older) female population.
- ¹¹ The Canadian total does not include British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Northwest Territories for 1996-97.
- ¹² This summary does not include adult female offenders raised to higher courts, or court findings of not guilty, absolute discharge, etc.
- ¹³ 'Other' includes probation, fine, restitution, absolute and conditional discharge, suspended sentence, payment of legal costs, suspension of drivers' license, and unknown.

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Women in federal and provincial-territorial correctional facilities

by *Shelley Trevethan*¹
Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics

Women have historically made up a relatively small proportion of persons involved in crime. For instance, women currently make up less than one fifth of adults charged with an offence. However, the proportion of women involved in the criminal justice system has been increasing, putting new demands on the police, courts, correctional facilities and community programs. Over the past 20 years, the proportion of women charged with a criminal offence has increased from 14% to 18%. Similarly, the number of women admitted to provincial-territorial custody has increased from 5% to 9%, and to federal custody from 3% to 5%.²

Since females are a relatively small proportion of the inmate population, accommodation and program planning may be more of a challenge than it is for males. A better understanding of the characteristics of female inmates can help program planners and policy makers decide how to best utilize limited budgets to address the needs of this population. As well, it may help identify areas for prevention, which could reduce the incidence of crimes committed by females.

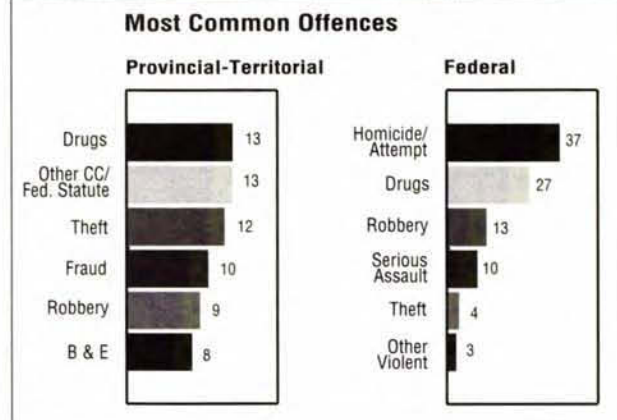
This article examines the characteristics of women in provincial-territorial and federal correctional facilities. The data are based on a one-day snapshot of inmates who were on-register in adult correctional facilities at midnight on Saturday, 5 October 1996.³ Since the data are based on inmates who were in a facility on one particular day, generalizations should be made with caution.⁴

Women a small proportion

On snapshot day, females accounted for 5% of the inmates on-register in Canadian correctional facilities (1,807 women out of 37,541 inmates). Women made up a larger proportion of the provincial-territorial inmate population (7%) than the federal female inmate population (2%).

Women in provincial-territorial facilities were incarcerated for different types of offences than those in federal facilities. Although women in

Figure 1



provincial-territorial facilities were primarily incarcerated for non-violent offences (72%), women in federal facilities were typically incarcerated for violent offences (64%).⁵

This would be expected since persons in federal facilities are serving longer sentences than those in provincial-territorial facilities, typically for more serious offences.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the most common offences among women in provincial-territorial facilities were drug-related offences (13%), "other" Criminal Code or federal statute offences (13%) or theft (12%). The most common offences for women in federal facilities were homicide/attempted murder (37%) and drug-related offences (27%).

Although females in federal facilities were more likely to be incarcerated for violent offences than those in provincial-territorial facilities, overall, females were less

likely than males to be incarcerated for violent offences. A smaller proportion of female than male inmates were convicted of violent offences in provincial-territorial (28% versus 34%) and in federal (64% versus 74%) facilities.

Women in provincial-territorial facilities were incarcerated for different types of offences than those in federal facilities.

Female inmates were also serving shorter sentences than males.⁶ The median aggregate sentence length for females in provincial-territorial facilities was approximately five months, compared with approximately six months for males. The median aggregate sentence length for females in federal facilities was approximately four and one-half years, compared with five years for males.

Demographics

As illustrated in Figure 2, the characteristics of females in provincial-territorial and in federal facilities were similar. In both provincial-territorial and federal facilities, the majority of females were younger than 35 years of age (61% and 57%, respectively). Females in the Canadian population tend to be older — only one third of adult females are younger than 35. On snapshot day, almost one quarter (23%) of provincial-territorial female inmates, and 20% of federal female inmates, were Aboriginal. Comparatively, female Aboriginal persons make up about 2% of the female adult population in Canada.

Past research has shown that female inmates are more likely to be unattached (single, divorced, separated or widowed) than males.

unattached at the time of admission (69% versus 58%). However, the same proportion of females and males in provincial-territorial facilities were unattached (76% each). These data refer to marital status at time of admission to the facility, so it is possible that marital status will change during the sentence.

Female inmates had fairly low educational levels compared with the population of Canada.⁸ Approximately one third (35%) of female inmates in provincial-territorial facilities had a grade nine education or less. This was the case for an even larger proportion of those in federal facilities — about

one half of female inmates (48%). In Canada, 19% of female adults had a grade nine education or less. Female and male inmates had similar educational levels.

Based on available data,⁹ 64% of female inmates in provincial-territorial facilities and 80% of females in federal facilities were unemployed at time of admission to the correctional facility. In comparison, 10% of females in Canada in 1996 were unemployed. Substantially fewer male

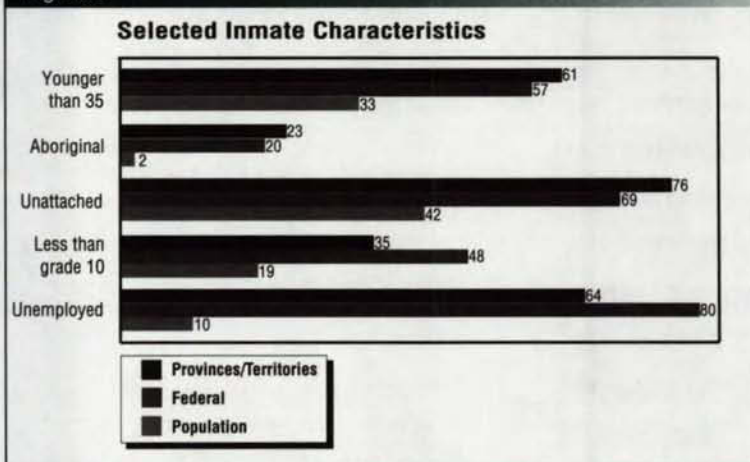
inmates were unemployed at time of admission (43% of provincial-territorial male inmates and 54% of federal male inmates).

Lower risk of reoffending

Female inmates were classified as lower risk to reoffend than males. Less than one half (44%) of provincial-territorial female inmates compared with 49% of male inmates were classified as high risk. The difference was more pronounced for inmates in federal facilities. Just over one quarter (28%) of female inmates, compared with 59% of male inmates, were

classified as high risk. A different measurement was used to examine risk/needs of federal inmates; direct comparisons between provincial-territorial and federal inmates is therefore not possible.

Figure 2



Past research has shown that female inmates are more likely to be unattached (single, divorced, separated or widowed) than males.⁷ The data from the snapshot partially support these findings. In federal facilities, larger proportions of females than males were

Figure 3

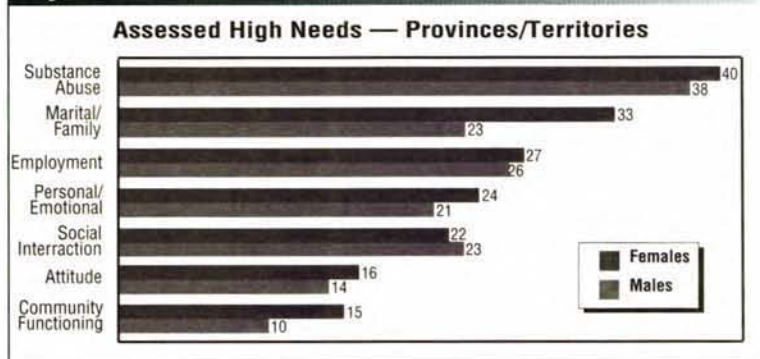
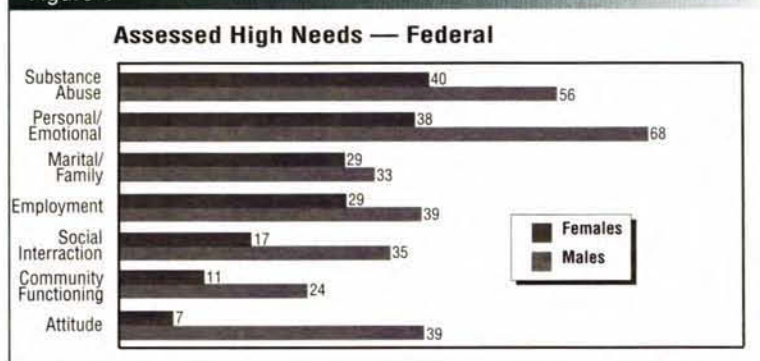


Figure 4



Need dimensions

A set of criminal history and need indicators were collected for the inmate populations in eight jurisdictions.¹⁰

Female inmates in provincial-territorial facilities who reported needs data were rated as having slightly higher needs than males on all need dimensions, except social interaction (Figure 3). Females demonstrated the highest needs in the areas of substance abuse (40%) and marital/family issues (33%).

In contrast, among federal inmates, females were rated as having lower needs than males on all need dimensions (Figure 4). Females were recorded as having the highest needs in the areas of substance abuse (40%) and personal/emotional needs (38%). The greatest difference between female and male inmates

was in the area of attitude. Only 7% of female inmates were rated as high need in this area compared with 39% of males.

Summary

Women in provincial-territorial facilities were incarcerated for different types of offences than women in federal facilities. Women in federal facilities were most often incarcerated for violent offences such as homicide or attempted murder, while those in provincial-territorial facilities were most often incarcerated for non-violent offences such as drug-related crimes or theft. Female inmates in the two levels of jurisdiction, however, share many characteristics. They tended to be in their early thirties and unattached, and a disproportionately high percentage were Aboriginal. They also tended to have low levels of education and to be unemployed.

Female inmates differed in some respects from males. Females were less likely than males to be incarcerated for violent offences. Also, females were classified as lower risk to reoffend than males. In provincial-territorial facilities, females were assessed as having higher needs than males, while in federal facilities, they were assessed as having lower needs. Finally, male and female inmates were similar in age and education; substantially fewer males, however, were unemployed at time of admission to the correctional facility.

Differences in the characteristics of female and male inmates, as well as between women serving federal and provincial-territorial sentences, suggest that it is necessary to examine programs and policy for female inmates to ensure they fit their specific needs. ■

¹ R.H. Coates Building, RC 19A, Holland Avenue and Scott Street, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6.

² Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Canadian Crime Statistics*, cat. no. 85-205-XPE (Ottawa, ON: Industry Canada, 1996); CCJS, *Adult Correctional Services in Canada*, cat. no. 85-211-XPE. (Ottawa, ON: Industry Canada, 1997).

³ S. Trevethan, G. Carrière, B. MacKillop, A. Finn, D. Robinson, F. Porporino, and W. Millson. *A One-Day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada's Adult Correctional Facilities*, cat. no. 85-601-XPE. (Ottawa, ON: Industry Canada, 1999).

⁴ The "on-register" population refers to the number of inmates who have been placed in a facility to serve their sentence. Inmates may not be physically located at the facility for a

number of reasons (e.g., on temporary absence, serving an intermittent sentence in the community, away for medical reasons or court appearances).

- ⁵ Using the most serious offence for which the inmate is incarcerated. The most serious offence is based on the Seriousness Index of the Revised Uniform Crime Reporting Survey violation coding structure that defines seriousness in terms of length of maximum sentence and the degree of injury or threat of injury to the victim. Offences are grouped into the following major offence categories: violent offences, property offences, and other Criminal Code and federal statute offences.
- ⁶ An offender can be convicted of multiple charges and be ordered to serve the various prison sentences at the same time as, or following, one another. The "aggregate sentence" is the total time for all sentences that the offender must serve in the institution.
- ⁷ H. Boritch. *Fallen Women: Female Crime and Criminal Justice in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Nelson, 1977); H. Johnson. *Women and Crime in Canada*, TRS No. 9 (Ottawa, ON: Programs Branch, Ministry Secretariat, Solicitor General Canada, 1986.)

⁸ Education data were not available for British Columbia and Yukon inmates, and for 64% of Correctional Service of Canada "federal" inmates.

⁹ Employment data were not available for Quebec and Ontario, and for 81% of Correctional Service of Canada "federal" inmates. Percent unemployed refers to those not employed and seeking work. It does not include those who report that they would like to work, but who have stopped searching because they believe no work is available.

¹⁰ Risk/needs data were analyzed for Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Correctional Service Canada. Data for Correctional Service of Canada inmates were based on a different instrument and may not be directly comparable to other jurisdictions. It should be noted that risk assessments are not completed on all inmates (i.e., remand inmates are excluded, as are some sentenced inmates — typically those serving short sentences).

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Reintegration potential profiles for federally sentenced women

by *Larry Motiuk¹ and Mark Nafekh*
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Current federal correctional assessment strategies and standards of practice should help to identify women offenders at admission with good potential for successful reintegration. For example, women offenders with 'high' reintegration potential at time of admission might be defined as either low-risk offenders or medium-risk offenders who are manageable in the community with prescriptive intervention and appropriate supervision. Women offenders with 'moderate' reintegration potential at time of admission might be re-evaluated as offenders having high reintegration potential upon successful program completion at time of parole eligibility.

The 'Reintegration Potential Profiles' explored in the body of this article are based on objective classification information derived from the Correctional Service of Canada's Offender Management System (OMS). It should be noted that the profiles reflect available offender intake assessment information. A review of OMS indicates variations exist in the number of classification instruments completed. (The files of those offenders admitted prior to implementation may be missing information.) Future analyses will account for more completeness. It is expected that judicious attention to case management practice and improved efficiency will increase safe reintegration.

Case management decision-making is the foundation on which the success of offender reintegration rests. To ensure safe reintegration, it is necessary to acknowledge the pivotal role decision-makers, equipped with objective classification procedures, play in the timely and safe release of a women offender.

Although the increased emphasis on public safety in the 1990s fuelled substantial gains in the predictive accuracy of objective risk assessment technology, it also contributed to

safe reintegration efforts by identifying good release potential candidates earlier in the sentence and encouraging greater efficiencies across case management functions.

Today, most correctional agencies administer objective classification instruments to improve case management decision-making. Such systematic use of static/dynamic risk assessment strategies can yield gains in the correct identification and timely release of women offenders with good potential for successful reintegration. High reintegration potential might therefore be conceptualized as either low-risk offenders or those women offenders deemed moderate risk, but manageable in the community with prescriptive intervention and suitable level of supervision.

Safe reintegration

Legally, the Correctional Service of Canada operates under the 1992 *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*.² It states that the purpose of the federal correctional system is to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by:

- carrying out sentences imposed by the courts through the safe and humane custody and supervision of offenders;
- assisting in the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community.

The values and beliefs of the Correctional Service of Canada are articulated in its mission document,³ which has been endorsed by every Solicitor General of Canada

Case management decision-making is the foundation on which the success of offender reintegration rests. To ensure safe reintegration, it is necessary to acknowledge the pivotal role decision-makers, equipped with objective classification procedures, play in the timely and safe release of a women offender.

since 1989, including the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, who formally signed the document in April 1999. The mission statement sets out the following: the Correctional Service of Canada, as part of the criminal justice system and respecting the rule of law, contributes to the protection of society by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure and humane control. The mission statement provides federal corrections with a strategic framework for contributing to safe reintegration.

Operationally, safe reintegration encompasses a broad range of decisions intended to place women offenders in the least restrictive setting possible, grant temporary absence or conditional release, and invoke suspension or revocation of conditional release when necessary. At admission to federal corrections, decisions about security-level placement, program requirements and release potential significantly affect a woman offender's movement through her sentence.

Assumptions and estimating potential

The estimation of reintegration potential at admission is based on several major assumptions about case management practice. First, a review of objective classification information derived from the OMS indicates that some potential release candidates may not always be processed according to their relative risk level. For example, there may be female offenders, rated lower risk by objective tools, who are not being placed at the expected security levels, or who remain in custody after parole eligibility or are released later on statutory release. By directing correctional attention toward women offenders who meet objective criteria for being considered lower risk and providing support to these offender groups accordingly, safe reintegration will be advanced.

Secondly, variations in the amount of time that is required to complete various case management activities suggest significant contributions to safe reintegration would be realized by modest reductions in processing time frames. For example, modest reductions in case preparation days for women offenders, or waiting periods to program, accumulated over hundreds of cases, can result in substantial improvements in safe reintegration.

Operationally, safe reintegration encompasses a broad range of decisions intended to place women offenders in the least restrictive setting possible, grant temporary absence or conditional release, and invoke suspension or revocation of conditional release when necessary.

Objective security and program classification is desirable for good correctional management and to demonstrate that decisions are informed and defensible.⁴ Systematic and objective classification may reduce decision-making errors regarding the incarceration of women offenders at too high a security level. Over-classification is not only more expensive financially, but also limits subsequent release opportunities for women offenders.

Federally sentenced women undergo a comprehensive and integrated Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) process at time of admission.⁵ The OIA has a number of components: community intake assessment, initial assessment, static risk (youth and adult criminal history) assessment, dynamic risk (employment, marital/family, associates/social interaction, substance abuse, community functioning, personal/emotional orientation, attitude) assessment, psychological and supplementary assessments, level of motivation assessment, security level

designation using the Custody Rating Scale,⁶ and an estimate of reintegration potential (low, moderate, high).

A particular combination or convergence of three objective risk-based measures — static risk rating, dynamic risk rating and security level designation — determines reintegration potential at admission for women offenders.

For example, a women offender rated at admission as 'low' on static risk, 'low' on dynamic risk and minimum-security (as reflected by the Custody Rating Scale) would be classified as 'high' reintegration potential. Conversely, a women offender rated 'high' on static risk, 'high' on dynamic risk and maximum-security would be classified as 'low' reintegration potential. The 27 possible combinations of the three intake measures are grouped according to relative reintegration potential ranging from 'low', to 'moderate' to 'high.'

Women offenders in federal institutions

A 31 December 1998 review of the Correctional Service of OMS files with *complete* OIA data identified a total of 293 (87% of 336) federally sentenced women in institutions. The Service has special facilities for women offenders that accounted for most of the institutional population. For example, 21 (7%) were located at Nova Institution for Women, 52 (18%) at Joliette Institution, 26 (9%) at Prison for Women, 76 (26%) at Grand Valley Institution for Women, 9 (3%) at Isabel McNeil House, 26 (9%) at Okimaw Ochi Healing Lodge and 52 (18%) at Edmonton Institution for Women.

The average age of the federally sentenced woman in institutions was 35 years, ranging from 19 to 88. Roughly, 60% of the institutional population were Caucasian, 23% Aboriginal, 8% Black and 3% Asiatic.

An end-of-1998 OMS review also determined that among the incarcerated women offender population there were 79 homicide offenders, 6 sex offenders, 120 robbery offenders and 71 drug offenders. The average sentence length for federally incarcerated women offenders was 3.1 years (excluding lifers and revoked cases). Nearly 75% were serving sentences four years or less and 60 cases (18%) were serving life sentences.

Intake assessment measures

Table 1 shows a distribution of the three objective classification measures taken at admission — static risk, dynamic risk and custody level designation — as well as reintegration potential, by quarter in 1998. The table illustrates that women offenders, as a group, show considerable potential for successful reintegration at admission. In fact, roughly half the female offenders in the institutional population were objectively classified as 'high' reintegration potential at admission. The possibility

remains that, with the benefit of appropriate programming, those women offenders assessed at admission to be 'moderate' or 'low' reintegration potential might be re-evaluated as having 'high' reintegration potential upon successful program completion at time of parole eligibility.

Profiling reintegration potential

Reintegration potential profiles can offer an early indication of the release potential and program services necessary to enhance the release potential of women offenders. Among women offenders with the highest potential for release and for whom priority case preparation should be provided are those cases rated in the high or moderate reintegration

Table 1

National Overview of the Federal Women Institutional Population: Percentage Distribution of Intake Measures (at time of admission)

Intake Measure	March 1998 N=228 n (%)	June 1998 N=232 n (%)	September 1998 N=234 n (%)	December 1998 N=240 n (%)
Static Risk Level				
Low	58 (25.4)	59 (25.4)	61 (26.1)	58 (24.2)
Medium	101 (44.3)	104 (44.8)	107 (45.7)	115 (47.9)
High	69 (30.3)	69 (29.7)	66 (28.2)	67 (27.9)
Dynamic Risk Level				
Low	45 (19.7)	44 (19.0)	37 (15.8)	38 (15.8)
Medium	94 (41.2)	95 (40.9)	107 (45.7)	115 (47.9)
High	89 (39.0)	93 (40.1)	90 (38.5)	87 (36.3)
Custody Level				
Minimum	61 (26.8)	62 (26.7)	68 (29.1)	86 (35.8)
Medium	148 (64.9)	149 (64.2)	144 (61.5)	134 (55.8)
Maximum	19 (8.3)	21 (9.1)	22 (9.4)	20 (8.3)
Reintegration Potential				
Low	52 (22.8)	55 (23.7)	58 (24.8)	56 (23.3)
Moderate	59 (25.9)	57 (24.6)	46 (19.7)	45 (18.8)
High	117 (51.3)	120 (51.7)	130 (55.6)	139 (57.9)

Note: Distributions based on availability of three intake measures on each offender.

Figure 1

**Reintegration Potential Profiles
1998 – National Overview (Women Offenders)**

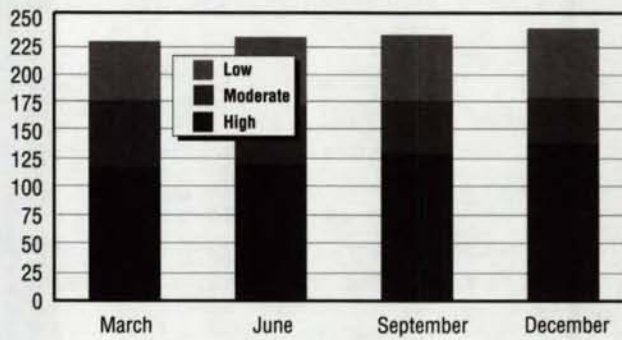
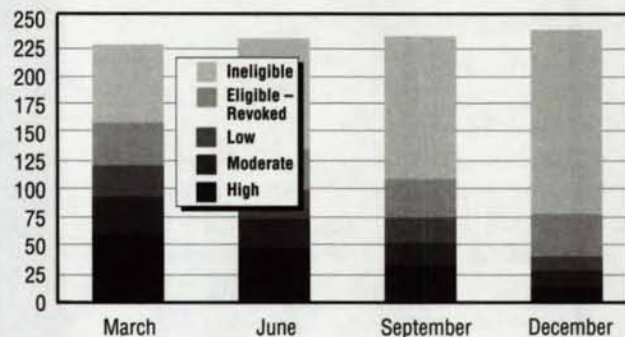


Figure 2

**Reintegration Potential Profiles
1998 – National Overview (Women Offenders)
with Discretionary Release Eligibility**



Note: 1. CSC, Research Branch 07-99.
Note: 2. Offenders with Custody Rating Scale and OIA Risk/Needs Rating.

potential categories. Among these groups, women offenders who do not receive a discretionary release or receive it sometime after their day or full parole eligibility dates represent additional release potential that would contribute to safe reintegration.

A review of OMS data, using stacked bar-charts (see Figure 1), suggests that some women offenders rated in the 'high' reintegration potential categories may be available for an earlier discretionary release, and additional or earlier releases from the 'moderate' reintegration potential category may be possible with proper support. However, a potential release presupposes eligibility while under sentence.

Figure 2 introduces the criteria of within or beyond 180 days prior to full parole eligibility date (also known as day parole). Using discretionary release eligibility dates, another reintegration potential category is formed of women offenders who had their conditional

release revoked. A close inspection of these cases across each quarter in 1998 revealed a substantial percentage of revoked women offenders with potential for re-release.

An examination of the end-of-December 1998 'Reintegration Potential Profile' bar chart for women offenders relative to an earlier profile taken at the end-of-March 1998 reveals a number of interesting findings. Overall, there has been a substantial increase in the proportion of women offenders in federal institutions *ineligible* for discretionary release over this time period. Taken with the noticeable decrease in the proportion of 'high' reintegration potential women offenders beyond day parole eligibility over the past year, it may be reflecting improvements in the timely preparation of good release potential candidates for discretionary release decision-making.

Validity

One way of looking at the validity of an estimate of 'reintegration potential' for women offenders at admission is by examining the relationships between the various categories and release. A follow-up of the 228 women offenders in the end-of-March 1998 profile to June 1999 revealed that 133 (58%) have been released. Of those released, 60.2% were assessed to be 'high' reintegration potential, 24% were 'moderate' and 15.8% were 'low.' Higher reintegration potential was found to be significantly associated ($r = .23$, $p < .001$) with likelihood of release.

When discretionary release was taken into account (65% of those released), 72.4% were assessed to be 'high' reintegration potential, 16.1% were 'moderate' and 11.5% were 'low'. Again, higher reintegration potential was found to significantly associated with likelihood of discretionary release ($r = .30$, $p < .001$).

As for post-release outcome, 15 (11.3%) of the released women offenders had been returned to federal custody. Of note, almost 75% were revoked without committing a new offence. Although the highest percentage of return to federal custody was among the 'low' reintegration potential group, the very low base rate across the categories made tests of statistical significance invalid. It would appear that the desired correctional objective of safe reintegration for women offenders is being achieved.

Gaining potential through intervention

Consistent with efforts directed towards realization of the Service's mission, a concerted effort is required to ensure that correctional programs and interventions are linked to estimates of reintegration potential. To accomplish this task, several things in corrections must happen. First, evaluations of core programs for women offenders have to be ongoing and reflect impacts on achieving safe reintegration. Second, the practice of accrediting correctional programs for women offenders has to begin to ensure programs meet high standards of integrity, both in terms of content and delivery. Finally, a mechanism is required to incorporate treatment information on women offenders into decisions regarding future reintegration potential.

The incorporation of objective and systematic assessments of women offenders and principles of effective intervention into a reintegration framework is both legitimate and potentially fruitful.

Summary

The incorporation of objective and systematic assessments of women offenders and principles of effective intervention into a reintegration framework is both legitimate and potentially fruitful. The process and content reflected in the Correctional Service of Canada's static/dynamic risk assessment and custody level designation practices with women offenders are clearly compatible with the goals of safe reintegration. Importantly, this appears to be occurring as correctional staff and decision-makers have begun to more carefully consider the issue of 'Reintegration Potential Profiles.' Future research will highlight several new areas where further reintegration gains can be made and add support to the position that success is being achieved with women offenders. ■

¹ 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0P9.

² Corrections and Conditional Release Act, RSC, C-20, 1992.

³ Mission of the Correctional Service of Canada, Cat. No. JS 82-46/1999 (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1999).

⁴ L. Motiuk and R. Serin, "Situating Risk Assessment in the Reintegration Potential Framework," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 10, 1 (1998): 19-22.

⁵ L. Motiuk, "Classification for Correctional Programming: The Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) Process," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 9, 1 (1997): 18-22; see also K. Blanchette, "Classifying Female Offenders for Correctional Interventions," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 9, 1 (1997): 36-41.

⁶ F. Luciani, "Tried and True: Proof that the Custody Rating Scale is Still Reliable and Valid" *Forum on Corrections Research*, 9, 1 (1998): 13-18; see also F. Luciani, "Exploring Reintegration Potential: Impacts of Initial Placement Practice" *Forum on Corrections Research*, 10, 1 (1998): 23-28.

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A meta-analytic investigation into effective correctional intervention for female offenders

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Evidence from past meta-analytic reviews has suggested that the principles of human service, risk, need and general responsivity are associated with reductions in recidivism for general offender populations. However, a recent study stated "the question of whether or not these findings (i.e., principles of effective correctional treatment) can be generalized to the female offender population still is very much in need of an answer" (p. 517).² The purpose of the present meta-analytic investigation³ was to explore whether adherence to the principles of human service, risk, need, general responsivity, program integrity and core correctional practice were important program considerations for female offenders. The results demonstrated that adherence to these principles significantly enhanced program effectiveness through higher mean reductions in recidivism. This paper concludes with a summary of effective correctional practices for female offenders and directions for future research.

Introduction

Across settings as diverse as probation and custody, in outcome studies of varying methodological soundness and over several decades, the principles and strategies associated with general social learning perspectives on crime and corrections have received moderate-to-strong support in pursuit of the objective of reduced reoffending.⁴ The principles include those of case classification for effective human service in justice contexts,⁵ those of integrity in program implementation and delivery,⁶ and that of attention to the relationship and structuring dimensions of effective correctional staff practice.⁷ The case classification principles of human service, risk, need and general responsivity are now widely appreciated although they have been questioned seriously by some advocates of female-specific treatment.⁸ Program integrity refers to management concerns such as the

selection, training and supervision of staff as well as specificity of treatment models and adequate dosage. According to the relationship and structuring perspective on staff practice, positive staff influence is greatest in the context of high-quality interpersonal relationships within which learning opportunities are structured and nurtured through high levels of differential reinforcement and through high-quality modelling and structured skill building. The descriptions of core practice were developed to describe valuable roles and strategies for all direct contact workers in corrections. What follows is a brief meta-analytic overview of the application of the three sets of principles to correctional programming with female offenders.⁹

Program integrity refers to management concerns such as the selection, training and supervision of staff as well as specificity of treatment models and adequate dosage.

Methodology

The sample of 26 unique studies yielded 45 tests of treatment in samples in which female offenders predominated (in 24 tests, the sample was composed exclusively of female offenders). The 45 effect size estimates were phi coefficients reflecting the percentage-point difference in recidivism rates

between treatment and control groups. For example, an effect size of .30 reflects a 30 percentage-point difference between a 65% recidivism rate in the control group and a rate of 35% in the treatment group.

Results

Table 1 reveals that mean reduction in recidivism increased with adherence to each of the principles of effective human service. Reductions in the re-offending rates of female offenders were found when human service was

delivered and in particular when human service was delivered to higher-risk cases, when service targeted criminogenic rather than noncriminogenic needs, and when structured social learning and cognitive behavioural strategies were employed. Indeed, the average effect varied from a mild increase in reoffending when inappropriate treatment was delivered to lower risk female offenders (that is, $-.04$) to a very positive high of $+.36$ when human service was applied in a manner consistent with each of risk, need and general responsivity. Note that only 27% (12/45) of the tests with female offenders involved human service programs consistent with each of the case classification principles.

The indicators of core correctional staff practices are outlined in Table 2. Evidence of these specific practices was much more limited than the evidence favouring adherence with the principles of case classification. At a maximum, only 16% of the tests had workers engaging in the structured learning steps for skill building. Minimally, only 2% of the tests selected workers according to their relationship skills. However, inspection of the mean effect sizes reveals that the majority of the elements of core correctional practice were associated with reduced reoffending. The indicators of core correctional practice formed a meaningful set (alpha coefficient = $.81$, mean composite score = $.67$, $SD = 1.42$) and the composite measure of core practice correlated substantially with effect size ($r = .58$).

Table 3 shows that mean reduction in recidivism was significantly enhanced under indicators of integrity for the monitoring of in-program process and intermediate change. The 10 indicators formed a meaningful set (alpha internal consistency coefficient = $.83$) and the composite integrity score was associated with effect size ($r = .52$, mean composite score = 3.44 , $SD = 2.82$). As would be expected, however, program integrity was not related to effect size when treatment was inappropriate according to the principles of human service, risk, need and general responsivity (the correlation of integrity and effect size was $-.02$, $k = 33$ for inappropriate service, and $.54$, $k = 12$, for appropriate service). In other words, a high level of integrity in the delivery of otherwise inappropriate treatment was not helpful with female offenders.

Finally, the robustness of the effects of appropriate treatment, integrity and core correctional practice was explored. The effects were found in both randomized and non-randomized studies and

Table 1
Mean Effect Size by Principles of Effective Human Service

Principle (% with indicator present)	Adherence to Principle		Correlation with Effect Size
	No (k)	Yes (k)	
Human service vs. sanctions without service (78%)	.01 (10)	.18 (35)	.31
Risk (80%)	-.04 (9)	.19 (36)	.40
Criminogenic needs paramount (47%)	.04 (24)	.26 (21)	.49
General responsivity: (33%) (cognitive behavioural/social learning)	.08 (30)	.27 (15)	.38
Adherence to all four principles (27%)	.07 (33)	.36 (12)	.56

Notes: k = number of tests of treatment; ns = $p > .05$ one-tailed.
These data will be tabled in "What works for female offenders: A meta-analytic review" to be published in Crime and Delinquency, Sage Publications in October 1999.
Effect size estimates are phi coefficients reflecting the percentage-point difference in recidivism rates between treatment and control groups.

Table 2
Mean Effect Size by Indicators of Core Correctional Practices (CCP)

Indicators of CCP	Absent (k)	Present (k)	Correlation with Effect Size
Relationship skills (2%)	.13 (44)	.64 (1)	.32
Structuring skills (16%)	.09 (38)	.45 (7)	.56
Effective reinforcement (2%)	.13 (44)	.83 (1)	.45
Problem-solving (11%)	.12 (40)	.33 (5)	.29
Effective modelling (9%)	.12 (41)	.43 (4)	.39
Effective disapproval (2%)	.13 (44)	.64 (1)	.32
Effective use of authority (4%)	.13 (43)	.40 (2)	.24ns
Advocacy/brokerage (4%)	.14 (43)	.30 (2)	.14ns

Notes: k = number of tests of treatment; ns = $p > .05$ one-tailed.
Effect size estimates are phi coefficients reflecting the percentage-point difference in recidivism rates between treatment and control groups.

Table 3

Mean Effect Size with Indicators of Program Integrity			
Indicators of Integrity	Absent (k)	Present (k)	Correlation with Effect Size
Specific model (56%)	.05 (20)	.22 (25)	.36
Relationship factors (2%)	.13 (44)	.64 (1)	.32
Trained workers (44%)	.07 (25)	.23 (20)	.33
Clinical supervision of workers (29%)	.07 (32)	.33 (13)	.51
Printed program and/ or training manuals (16%)	.12 (38)	.28 (7)	.26
Monitoring of process/change (44%)	.10 (25)	.20 (20)	.22ns
Adequate dosage (40%)	.09 (27)	.22 (18)	.28
Small sample (58%)	.07 (19)	.19 (26)	.26
New/fresh program (38%)	.10 (28)	.22 (17)	.26
Involved researcher (18%)	.08 (37)	.45 (8)	.62

Notes: k= number of tests of treatment; ns = p > .05 one-tailed

Effect size estimates are phi coefficients reflecting the percentage-point difference in recidivism rates between treatment and control groups.

in studies that involved predominantly ethnic minority or ethnic majority groups of offenders. None of the effects of appropriate treatment, integrity and core correctional practice reached statistically significant levels with effect size for adult female offenders. However, only nine tests of treatment involved adult offenders. Our analyses also revealed that appropriate treatment, integrity and core practices were statistically non-significant in residential programs. Our sample of studies did not include a single test of human service with female offenders in a restorative justice context.

Conclusion

Although little has been understood about "what works" for female offenders, the findings of this meta-analysis outline a theoretically based and empirically validated set of guidelines for delivering effective correctional treatment to this population. Subject to additional research, we conclude now that the principles of case classification, integrity and core correctional practice are highly relevant to program design and delivery with female offenders.

Despite these preliminary findings, several issues still need to be examined. The number of studies of female offenders, and in particular of incarcerated female offenders, adult female offenders and female offenders in restorative justice contexts, is very small. The lack of controlled-outcome studies of specific responsivity factors, in particular of gender-specific responsivity factors, makes them a high priority along with studies of adult and incarcerated female offenders and with studies of human service in a restorative justice context. ■

¹ 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6.

² B. A. Koons, J. D. Burrow, M. Morash and T. Bynum, "Expert and offender perceptions of program elements linked to successful outcomes for incarcerated women," *Crime and Delinquency*, 43 (1997): 512-532.

³ Some data from this article were extracted from "What works for female offenders: A meta-analytic review," currently in press in *Crime and Delinquency* (Sage Publications) for the October 1999 issue. More detailed information regarding design methodology and variable definitions along with several additional analyses are reported in that paper.

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- ⁶ D. A. Andrews and C. Dowden "Managing correctional treatment for reduced recidivism: A meta-analytic review of program integrity," manuscript submitted for publication. See also C. R. Hollin, "The meaning and implications of 'programme integrity,'" *What Works: Reducing Reoffending*, J. Mcguire, Ed. (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 1995).
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correctional supervision and counseling: Theory, research, assessment and practice," unpublished training manual, (Carleton University, Ottawa, ON: 1998). See also C. Dowden and D. A. Andrews, "The importance of staff characteristics in delivering effective correctional treatment: A meta-analytic review of core correctional practice," manuscript submitted for publication.

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- ⁹ For details see D. A. Andrews and C. Dowden "Managing correctional treatment for reduced recidivism: A meta-analytic review of program integrity." See also C. Dowden and D. A. Andrews, "What works for female offenders: A meta-analytic review." *Crime and Delinquency*, in press. See also C. Dowden and D. A. Andrews, "The importance of staff characteristics in delivering effective correctional treatment: A meta-analytic review of core correctional practice."

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Gender-responsive programming for women offenders: Guiding principles and practices

by Barbara Bloom¹

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Historically, correctional programming for women offenders has been based on assumptions of male criminality or pathways to crime. The research literature on "what works" in terms of correctional treatment tends to continue this focus on males. As we examine programming and evaluation for women involved in the criminal justice system, we cannot assume that the knowledge and tools developed to address male offenders can be applied to female offenders. This article discusses the relevance of gender-responsive program designs, interventions, and evaluation.²

Why focus on programming for women offenders?

The number of women involved in the criminal justice system is growing, yet few programs and services are geared specifically toward their needs. This has prompted criminal justice professionals to re-examine their sanctioning and supervision processes in terms of gender. Little is known about the characteristics of programs that serve women or about the criteria or elements that make programs effective for women offenders. This makes it critically important to document the characteristics of programs that lead to positive outcomes for this population, so that promising program models can be presented to criminal justice policy makers and practitioners.

Who are the women?

In order to design effective treatment programs that match female offenders' needs, it is important to consider the demographics and history of this population as well as how various life factors impact on their patterns of offending. Women offenders are less likely to have committed violent offences and more

likely to have been convicted of crimes involving drugs or property. Often their property offences are economically driven, motivated by poverty or the abuse of alcohol and other drugs. Many of the women incarcerated for violent offences committed their crimes against a spouse or partner. They are likely to report having been physically or sexually abused, often by the person they assaulted.³

Most of the women in the criminal justice system are poor, undereducated and unskilled women of colour.⁴ Many of these offenders meet the DSM-III-R criteria for one or more lifetime psychiatric disorders.⁵ Single motherhood is common among female offenders.⁶ Female offenders tend to have complex histories of trauma and substance abuse.⁷ Most are nonviolent and non-threatening to the community. The experience of abuse and poverty and substance abuse are their most common pathways to crime.⁸ Their greatest needs are for comprehensive treatment for drug abuse and trauma recovery as well as education and training in job and parenting skills.

Theories related to gender-responsive programming

It is critical to develop a theoretical approach to gender-sensitive

treatment that addresses the realities of women's lives. The profile of female offenders indicates that they are socially and economically marginalized and often victimized by family members and intimates. Studies of female offenders highlight the importance of relationships, and the fact that criminal involvement often comes through relationships with family members, significant

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others or friends.⁹ Women offenders who cite drug abuse as self-medication often discuss personal relationships as the cause of their pain. Abusive families and battering relationships are often strong themes in their lives.¹⁰ This has significant implications for therapeutic interventions that deal with the impact these relationships have on women's current and future behaviour.

Feminist theories also examine criminality as a reflection of women's and girls' lives and their attempts to survive.¹¹ Many women and girls on the social and economic margins struggle to survive outside legitimate enterprises, which brings them into contact with the criminal justice system.

Contemporary feminists also assert that the differences between men and women should be viewed as sources of strength, not weakness. These strengths include women's capacity for relatedness and connection. According to Dr. Jean Baker Miller, women develop themselves through attachment and affiliation with others. Miller calls for a new approach to psychology that acknowledges the different nature of women's development — an approach which affirms that connection, not separation, is the basis of growth for women.¹²

Gilligan explored relational issues in the context of development and moral reasoning. She explained differences in moral reasoning in a manner that did not devalue women's or girls' behaviour. In her studies of moral development, she discovered "a different voice" among women that emphasized relationship, commitment and care.¹³

Theories that focus on female development and relationships that are mutual, caring and empowering can be useful tools for correctional programs for women and girls. However, while women's focus on relationships can be self-empowering and growth producing, there are differences among women (e.g., race, class, culture, and sexual orientation) that need to be acknowledged in any theoretical or programmatic framework. Methods of survival and resistance to race, class and gender oppression also need to be articulated in theoretical and programmatic models.

Guiding principles for gender-responsive programs

The following guiding principles should be considered in the development of criminal justice programming and service delivery to women and girls:

- Equality does not mean sameness; equality of service does not mean giving women access to services traditionally reserved for men. Equality must be defined as providing opportunities that are relevant to each gender. Thus, services and interventions may appear very different depending on to whom they are being delivered;
- Gender-responsive programs are not simply "women only" programs that were designed for men;
- Females' sense of self is manifested and develops differently in female-specific groups as opposed to co-ed groups;
- The unique needs and issues of women and girls should be addressed in a woman-focused environment that is safe, trusting and supportive;
- Whenever possible, women and girls should be treated in the least restrictive programming environment available. The level of security should depend on both treatment needs and concern for public safety;
- Cultural awareness and sensitivity should be promoted, and the cultural resources and strengths in various communities should be utilized.

Promising programs and practices

To expand knowledge in this area, it is important to identify promising programs and practices related to positive outcomes for women offenders. In a recent study of promising correctional programs for women offenders, Koons *et al.* identified 67 effective programs for women offenders.¹⁴ Of those, there were specific outcome measures in only 12 programs. Recidivism or drug use were outcome measures in only six programs, and none considered which program components were linked to success. Koons *et al.* noted that

program administrators most often attributed positive outcomes to programs that targeted specific or multiple needs and provided continuums of care. Participants cited program staffing characteristics, the acquisition of skills, involvement in program delivery, and the influence of a social network or peer group as important aspects of successful treatment.

In a study of strategies for working with women offenders in community correctional settings, Austin *et al.* found that the most promising community-based programs for women offenders do not employ the clinical model of correctional treatment. Effective programs work with clients to broaden their range of responses to various types of behaviour and needs, enhancing their coping and decision-making skills. These programs use an "empowerment" model of skill building to develop competencies that enable women to achieve independence. Effective therapeutic approaches are multidimensional and deal with specific women's issues, including chemical dependency, domestic violence, sexual abuse, pregnancy and parenting, relationships and gender bias.¹⁵

What constitutes an effective gender-responsive treatment program?

A gender-responsive treatment program may integrate three theoretical perspectives — addiction, women's development, and trauma. Not only is the content of the program important, but so are the context and environment. According to Covington,¹⁶ the program design should include an environment that supports recovery and is characterized by:

- *Safety*: The environment is free of physical, emotional and sexual harassment, and spoken and unspoken rules of conduct provide appropriate boundaries. Although it may be impossible for a staff member to guarantee safety in her agency or institution, the treatment group itself is a safe place.
- *Connection*: Exchanges among the treatment group facilitator and group members feel mutual rather than one-way and authoritarian. Females begin to heal when they sense that a group facilitator wants to understand their experiences, is present with

them when they recall painful experiences, allows their stories to affect her, yet is not overwhelmed by their stories.

- *Empowerment*: The facilitator needs to model how a woman or girl can use power with and for others, rather than using power over others or being powerless. It is important to set firm, respectful, and empathic limits and to encourage the group members to use and believe in their abilities.

Three levels of intervention with women and girls include cognitive, affective and behavioural approaches. At the *cognitive* level, education can help to correct the misperceptions of women and girls and teach them to think critically when making decisions.

The *affective* level is an especially important component for a female treatment program. The absence of feeling or reduced feeling is common in early recovery, and affect emerges as recovery progresses. Women need to learn to express their feelings appropriately and contain them in healthy ways. Because women frequently become dependent on drugs in order to seek relief from painful emotions, they require an environment during treatment in which to understand and work through their feelings.

A gender-responsive treatment program also needs a *behavioural* component. Women and girls need to make changes in their substance abusing and other unhealthy behaviour while increasing levels of functioning in every aspect of their lives.

Assessing gender-responsivity in programming

Assessment, a critical tool for matching program interventions with an individual's needs, can help determine the best use of resources. Often, because there are only a few programs and services available, women are assigned to them whether they suit their needs or not. Gender-responsive programming should provide services designed to intervene holistically and constructively in a female's life. In order to accomplish this, some general questions related to appropriate services for women and girls should be asked:

- Does the program acknowledge and affirm commonalities and respect differences (e.g., race, class, and sexual orientation) among and within groups?
- Is the program grounded in theory? Is the program design based on statistical data and reliable developmental research?
- Does the program acknowledge and value the worth of individuals, regardless of their backgrounds and offence histories?
- Does the staff reflect the client population in terms of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation?
- Does the program utilize gender-specific assessment tools and treatment plans? Does it match appropriate treatment with the identified needs of the women and girls it serves?

When considering whether a program is gender-responsive, practitioners might also want to answer the following questions:

- In co-ed correctional settings, what is the ratio of women to men? Do men substantially outnumber women?
- If the program is women only, what is the composition of the staff in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation?
- What are the program's mission, goals and objectives? Is there mention of the unique needs of women and interventions specific to them?
- Does the program emphasize a "relational" treatment approach and encourage the development of growth-producing, trusting, and healthy relationships?
- Does the program begin at the point where the woman is in her life, then proceed in a manner that is sensitive to the pace and direction she chooses?
- Does the program use positive female role models and mentors?
- Does the program address trauma related to physical, sexual and emotional abuse?
- Does the program address chemical dependency within a context of physical, sexual and emotional trauma?

Assessment, a critical tool for matching program interventions with an individual's needs, can help determine the best use of resources.

- Does the program address pregnancy and parenting issues, including family reunification?
- Does the program provide for the development of skills that may lead to future employment in both traditional and non-traditional settings?
- Does the program address issues related to transition to the community (e.g., safe and affordable housing, aftercare, job training and placement, and child care)?
- Does the program offer components such as individual change (e.g., drug treatment); relational change (e.g., dealing with destructive relationships); and community change (e.g., altering the cultural and structural contexts surrounding women which may contribute to their problems or solutions)?

- Is the program child-friendly? Is the environment conducive to enhancing family relationships? Does it offer services to women and their children and caregivers?
- Does the program emphasize the building of support systems (e.g., women's resource networks, child care networks, transportation, racial, ethnic and cultural programs and advocacy organizations)?
- Does the agency provide staff training in gender-specific, culturally appropriate issues and service delivery?

Measuring effectiveness: Program evaluation

Funders and policy makers are increasingly mandating the documentation of program effectiveness. Outcome evaluations are valuable because they describe measures of program success or failure. They examine the short- and long-term impact of the intervention on program participants. Some examples of short-term outcome measures include program participation, rule violations, escapes from program, restitution paid, and arrest for new criminal offence. Examples of long-term outcome measures

include reconviction for a new offence, return to custody for a violation of probation or parole, and relapse from alcohol and drug recovery.

Ideally, outcome measures used in evaluations should be tied to the program's mission, goals and objectives. Outcome measures should go beyond the "traditional" recidivism measures to assess the impact of specific program attributes. Short-term and long-term outcome measures for female-specific programs could include:

- program participation/ completion/ discharge;
- alcohol/drug recovery;
- trauma recovery;
- attainment of General Equivalency Diploma, trade, college degree;
- employment;
- safe and sober housing (i.e., drug- and alcohol-free housing);
- improved relationships with family and significant others;
- regaining custody of children; and
- maintenance of physical and mental health.

The environment within which programs operate is an important factor in evaluation. Program evaluators need to be aware of the unique "culture" of individual programs, i.e., the relationships between staff and offenders and among offenders, and rules and regulations, to determine how these factors may impact on the program. Some corrections programs focus more on facility security and discipline than on treatment. What effect, if any, does this emphasis have on program

efficacy? Factors such as mandatory versus voluntary participation in treatment programs may affect program effectiveness and should therefore be considered in evaluation design.

Quantitative and qualitative research methods should be used in program evaluation in order to provide information on a more comprehensive range of characteristics of programs and participants.

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Conclusion

Women who are involved in the criminal justice system present different circumstances and needs than their male counterparts do. Effective gender-responsive programs and interventions must address this fact. Factors such as racism, sexism, and economic oppression cannot be overlooked in discussions of effective interventions for women offenders. While dealing with individual issues and therapeutic approaches

is important, the larger social issues of poverty, race and gender inequalities have a profound impact on the lives of women involved in the criminal justice system. Successful interventions must relate to the social realities from which women come and to which they will return. They must also be sensitive to cultural differences and expectations, so therapeutic approaches need to reflect this awareness. We are learning more about how to treat women offenders and tailor programs to their needs. The primary challenge is to use theories and research that support the development and implementation of these critical programs. ■

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The Peer Support Program at Edmonton Institution for Women

by Karen C. Eamon, Denise L. McLaren, Michelle M. Munchua and L. Michelle Tsutsumi¹
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The concept of developing a Peer Support Team (PST) in a women's prison began in 1990 at Kingston's Prison for Women through the work of Jan Heney, Julie Darke and local community women. Six years after the first PST was formed, a Peer Support Team coordinator manual and a Peer Support Team volunteer manual were prepared. These manuals facilitated the development of a Peer Support Program at the Edmonton Institution for Women (EIFW) with an extensive information base. EIFW's Peer Support Program was developed and coordinated by the Psychology Department, management and inmates in December 1996. The primary concern of the PST is to offer non-judgmental support, information, help with problem-solving and referrals.²

Forging the links

The foundation of the program is its Steering Committee, which meets monthly. These meetings provide a forum for solving structural and systemic concerns, as well as for informing committee members of the PST's progress. The multidisciplinary membership of the Steering Committee allows for differing perspectives to address issues quickly. The Steering Committee also includes various levels of staff and community members, who are a vital link to community resources, such as professionals that provide instruction and guidance during the 17-session training program. Through the Steering Committee, the PST Coordinator meets two objectives: linking the PST with staff in the facility and linking the PST with members of the community.

Program success depends on PST members who are equipped for dealing with a wide range of issues. Training topics include Peer Counselling and the PST Program; Socialization; Violence in Women's Lives; Childhood Sexual Abuse; Women in Conflict

with the Law; Counselling Skills; Self-esteem and Self-care; Coping Strategies: Self-injury; Substance Abuse; Eating Disorders; Women and Anger; Suicide Intervention; Counselling Ethics; Flashbacks and Nightmares; Impact on the Counsellor; and Community and Institutional Resources.

Program evaluation

Blanchette and Eljdupovic-Guzina³ conducted a pilot study of the Peer Support Program for federally sentenced women at EIFW in October 1997. There were approximately 55 federally sentenced women in the

population at this time. A comprehensive evaluation framework was used that included a detailed evaluation of each aspect of the program (i.e., coordination, PST member participation and inmates receiving support) from various perspectives (i.e., general population inmates, PST members and staff). At the time of this evaluation, 50% of 22 respondents had used the service at least once. Recipients of peer support found it extremely helpful/fulfilling their expectations. Staff felt the Peer Support Program reinforced positive effects of other programs to a greater degree for PST members than for non-PST members.

The primary concern of the PST is to offer non-judgmental support, information, help with problem-solving and referrals.

A further evaluative survey to determine the effectiveness of the Peer Support Program at EIFW, with 26 federally sentenced women and 13 staff members responding, was conducted by the Psychology Department in April 1999. Population at this time was approximately 65 federally sentenced women. Inmates from the general EIFW population were surveyed separately from the PST members.

Outcomes

In general, PST members tended to report the highest satisfaction and performance ratings. Using a Likert scale ranging from 1, not effective, to 5, extremely effective, PST members reported that they felt the Peer Support Program training was highly effective in preparing them for PST duties ($M = 4.25$), as well as promoting leadership ($M = 4.50$) and communication skills ($M = 4.25$). The quality of information presented on community resources was very good ($M = 4.25$), and the training session assisted in reinforcing the positive effects of other programs ($M = 4.55$). PST members estimated that they provide support to others an average of 3 to 5 hours per week. No reports were given of PST members being denied permission to respond to a call.

Performance ratings of the program given by women from the general offender population were slightly lower than those given by PST members, but remained in the above-average range. Of those surveyed, 95% stated that they were aware of the PST and knew how to request peer support services; 86% knew the identity of the individual members. The majority of inmates surveyed had requested peer support at least once. Of those who had not used peer support services, their main reason cited was that they had not yet felt any need to request such support. A small minority stated that they did not feel comfortable sharing their issues with anyone on the PST at the current time. Only one inmate reported that she had been denied access to peer support by staff. Newer inmates expressed a desire to learn more about the PST members and their training.

On average, it was reported that staff responded to inmate calls for peer support within 11 to 30 minutes, and PST members were reported to respond within the same length of time. Inmates in the Intake Unit indicated that they were very satisfied with the quality of the information delivered by

PST members during their weekly visits ($M = 4.05$). Inmates also rated PST members highly in terms of their listening skills ($M = 4.58$), problem-solving skills ($M = 3.94$), approachability ($M = 4.56$) and communication skills ($M = 4.22$). Expectations of the PST were also well met ($M = 4.28$), and those who had previously requested peer support reported that the sessions were very helpful ($M = 4.43$) in helping them deal with their issues.

Performance ratings by staff members were generally in the moderate range. Staff reported that PST members were effective in handling

crisis interventions ($M = 4.00$), providing services to other inmates ($M = 3.62$) and serving as role models ($M = 3.73$). It was also felt that the Peer Support Program training was efficient in preparing PST members for PST duties ($M = 3.77$), and in reinforcing the positive effects of other programs for PST members ($M = 3.62$) and for other inmates ($M = 3.62$). As well, staff were moderately-to-well satisfied with the sharing of PST procedures ($M = 3.62$) and PST activities and schedules ($M = 3.58$) with key institutional personnel.

A fairly high level of trust in PST members was reported ($M = 3.79$), and staff generally felt confident in referring an inmate to PST members. However, 75% of staff surveyed indicated that their trust level varied depending on individual PST members. Several new and casual staff members have shown an interest in learning more about the Peer Support Program, the training provided, and the

scope of services provided by PST members at EIFW. One staff member expressed concern that some inmates were using peer support for social purposes. However, the majority of the feedback was positive, with staff supporting the increasingly refined evaluation procedures in use. Above all, staff value the concept of women helping each other that the PST represents.

Suggestions from residents for meeting the PST's full potential included increasing the number of PST-sponsored events and services.

The majority of inmates surveyed had requested peer support at least once. Of those who had not used peer support services, their main reason cited was that they had not yet felt any need to request such support.

Staff recommended providing more self-care sessions for PST members and increasing communication with staff to strengthen the current Peer Support Program. Additional events sponsored by the PST, which contribute to self-care, have been organized recently, such as art therapy workshops.

According to PST members, much of the Peer Support Program's success can be attributed to the establishment of positive relations between PST members and staff and between PST members and other federally sentenced women. Comments were overwhelmingly positive, and one inmate said that "[the PST members] are the best people around... they are helpful, kind, smart, and easy to get along with."

The Peer Support Program at EIFW enjoys continued success largely because of the outstanding level of commitment on the part of all those involved in the program. The training offered to team members prepares them to provide guidance and support in many areas, as well as the opportunity to use their own life experience in a positive manner. The training does more than impart knowledge on specific topics, it builds confidence in team members. The ability to trust is a problem for most federally sentenced women, creating a barrier that inhibits potential for human growth; the PST has shown its ability to gain the confidence of these women with whom they share a bond. PST members are not trained therapists and shy away from giving advice; the skill most used is that of listening. Active listening often enables the PST member to aid a fellow inmate in discovering positive solutions

to the myriad of problems faced during incarceration. A gentle reminder of potential consequences, the presence of an understanding person who will listen, the feeling of not being alone, all are often essentials missing in the lives of federally sentenced women. The Peer Support Program provides the opportunity for inmates to offer these essentials to each other.

Conclusion

A high standard is set for team membership, providing incentive for members to be mindful of their own behaviour, and therefore be role models for the general offender population. This standard has earned the Peer Support Program, and the PST, the confidence and respect of staff and residents at EIFW. The PST Coordinator and the team work diligently to maintain a clear line of communication between staff, management, community members and inmates; as a result, they receive continued support and encouragement from all levels. Peer support continues to succeed because the high level of commitment and enthusiasm in the beginning remains today. There is no doubt that the program is beneficial to the institution as well as to the community, but it is most rewarding for the inmates who use and provide this service. The program provides an opportunity for federal sentenced women to participate actively in their personal growth and rehabilitation, helping them seek and rely on the courage and wisdom within themselves...the courage and wisdom they need in order to change. ■

¹ 11151-178th Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5S 2H9. Please direct inquiries regarding the Peer Support Program to Karen C. Eamon, Ph.D

² Peer Support Team, *Prepare for the Journey*. EIFW (Edmonton, AB, 1997).

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Mentoring Program at the Edmonton Institution for Women

by *Antoinette Fisher*¹

Edmonton Institution for Women, Correctional Service of Canada

The Edmonton Institution for Women may have opened its doors to federally sentenced women in November of 1995, but the planning for the Mentoring Program started almost a year earlier.

What is a mentor? The Mentoring Program's definition of a mentor is as follows: A mentor is an individual who recognizes the intrinsic value of other individuals and enters into a relationship of listening, sharing and exchanging information, experiences and personal development strategies with a federally sentenced woman. The intent of which is providing friendship, support and possible contacts as she prepares to enter the community.

All of the mentors are volunteers from the community. As only federally sentenced women are housed at EIFW almost all of mentors are females. Before they are allowed to become mentors they must agree to the following qualifications of a volunteer as outlined in the EIFW Volunteer Handbook:

1. A volunteer must be dependable; if you commit yourself to a program, you must be willing to follow through. Offenders have been let down in the past, so if you make promises, be prepared to keep them.
2. Volunteers must be stable persons themselves. Persons who become involved in such work should be people who have worked out or overcome their own problems. Persons who have unsolved problems (family, drugs, alcohol, etc.) themselves, will likely have trouble helping others.
3. A volunteer must have genuine concern for others. Empathy is better than sympathy. Try to genuinely understand but do not be naive. Appreciate the problems of the women you work with but don't make them your own.
4. A volunteer must be able to communicate with others. This means listening as well as talking. It means being open towards the other person.

5. A volunteer must set a good example. It is of utmost importance that a volunteer should be a person who, by her lifestyle, can provide a good role model for offenders.

Members of the mentoring group are required to receive security clearance and attend training in the area of Anatomy of a Set Up and Orientation Training before starting a mentoring relationship. Within the first year it is also required that they attend Women Centered Training and Cultural Awareness. All these training programs are provided by the correctional staff at EIFW and take a total of three days to complete.

Who is assigned a mentor varies from person to person. The offender is assessed by the leaders of the Mentoring Program for how committed they are to the Program. This factor is measured by how often they attend the monthly meetings. Also considered is what order they applied in and how much of a community support system they may already have. The two leaders of the program also attempt to match the personality of the mentor with that of the offender. Dependent on the individuals there are no set guidelines as to who is matched with who (i.e., young with young). Given enough time and understanding most matches work; however, feelings of rejection and failure surface when the relationship fails. Thankfully very few fail.

Once the mentor has been paired up with an offender it is suggested that for the first two to three months that they visit only in the Institution's Visitor and Correspondence area (V&C). This allows both the mentor and the offender to become more comfortable with each other. It allows them as well to outline what role the mentor will have in their life while having institutional staff close by.

Some mentors never feel totally comfortable outside of the visiting area, whereas others move very quickly in to meeting the offenders in the offender's housing unit or in the court

yard of the institution. It is mandatory that all mentors when visiting offenders outside the visiting area wear a personal portable alarm, which they sign out prior to their visit. This alarm allows institutional staff to know if assistance is required when they are out of view. The visits in the housing units generally allow the mentor and the offender to have some privacy, which the offenders find very important.

Some of the relationships developed between the mentors and the offenders have lasted for years. As well even some of the new relationships have carried on past the offender receiving her parole. Mentors have assisted the offenders with finding furnishings for their new apartments, helping them connect with support agencies in the community and just simply being there offering them support while they attempt to change their lives. One mentoring relationship has even turned into a private home placement, where the offender is residing with her mentor while on Day Parole.

The primary function of the mentor is still to provide friendship. The offenders have stated that it is very important to them to at least have one person in their lives who is not paid or forced to spend time with them. Regardless of whether or not the offender has no visitors or a lot of visitors a mentor can still benefit them. It is someone who knows you are incarcerated right from the beginning and therefore does not judge you or blame you for the hurt you may have caused. Many offenders become very protective of their mentors as they consider them their own personal friend.

With EIFW accepting federally sentenced women from across the Prairie region many offenders from outside of the city of Edmonton do not have regular visits from family and friends. Therefore loneliness can become a factor for them. The offenders have reported feelings of pain and guilt when their housemates receive visitors and they don't. Most of them are very aware that it is because of their own actions that they are separated from their families and that it will be a long time before they see them again. Hence the Mentoring Program can become very important to these women.

Once every three months the Mentoring Program hosts a social for the offenders. These socials tend to be very well attended by the mentors and the offenders. All offenders, whether they have a mentor or not, are invited. The socials provide a more relaxed atmosphere than generally found at the monthly meetings thereby allowing many women the opportunity to meet the mentors without the structure of a formal meeting. The mentors are allowed to bring in treats and refreshments for these meetings.

Some of the offenders who have grown close to their mentors have asked that they be allowed to become more involved with the correctional plan. To date this has only happened on occasion due to confidentiality both on the case management side and the mentor side. Mentors have however been invited to attend parole board hearings by the offender.

The offenders have suggested they would like to see all potential mentors commit to the program and believe in the benefit of it versus accepting individuals who wish to do their civic duty. Offenders want their mentor to not just come out to the monthly meetings but to commit to coming out to visit them at least once a week. Most offenders also wish to have access to their mentor whenever they feel the need for extra support, hence this brings up the question of phone numbers.

The mentors are advised that it is their own personal choice whether or not to provide their home phone number to the offender. They are cautioned to develop a strong relationship with the offender before considering doing this. Many choose never to give out their personal home numbers while others rush into it. If the mentor agrees to the exchange of the phone number it is generally placed on the offenders' millennium phone system. Only those with access to the offender's pin number would be able to access the number. Once the number is placed on the system, every time the offender calls her mentor it costs the mentor \$1.75 for a half-hour call. Not all the mentors can afford this or wish this intrusion on their personal life. Thus far there have been no reports of any offenders having taken advantage of this situation. Most offenders are respectful of the cost incurred by their mentor and limit their calls.

Mentoring relationships can turn into long term friendships, which are beneficial to both the offender and the mentor. Mentoring members have come and gone over the last three and a half years for various reasons (e.g., moves, loss of interest and lack of available time). At this time we have 23 active members. More are still awaiting their security clearances and training. As you can image with

an offender population at approximately 68 and only 23 mentors, many women do not get the wonderful opportunity to have their own mentor during their period of incarceration. ■

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Applied research related to corrections: An update

The January 1997 issue of Forum on Corrections Research, Volume 9, No. 1, reported the following:

"... the design and development of an intensive program for persistently violent (non-sexual) offenders has been completed and approved for pilot implementation"

In the May 1997 issue of FORUM, the Persistently Violent Offender Program demonstration project was described as:

"... a multi-year, multi-site, non-residential treatment program currently being piloted at Collins Bay Institution in Ontario. The program targets persistently violent offenders, defined as those having at least three convictions for violent offences. It is based on a social problem-solving theoretical framework and is delivered according to cognitive behavioural principles."

Today, we can say...

An intensive intervention, the Persistently Violent Offender (PVO) Program is designed to be more than an educational exercise. It is expected that persistently violent offenders must demonstrate skill acquisition and application of these skills for successful program completion. The first site of a multi-site PVO research program was implemented at Collins Bay Institution and three separate five-month programs have been completed. A second site has been established at Dorchester Penitentiary. Of special note, a treatment manual for this model program has been published and in June 1999 an international panel of experts accredited this research-based program.

Solutions: An intensive substance abuse program

by Alta Peachey¹

Edmonton Institution for Women, Correctional Service of Canada

The Substance Abuse Program for Federally Sentenced Women was developed in 1995 to meet the needs of women with moderate substance abuse problems. In place at the Edmonton Institution for Women (EIFW) since 1996, the program has been successful enough to investigate its applicability to more severe drug and alcohol addictions.

Background

A needs assessment for a more intensive substance abuse program at EIFW was conducted through a series of focus groups, which explored the following questions:

1. Is there a need for a more intensive substance abuse program at EIFW?
2. What do offenders feel would be of importance in an intensive substance abuse program?
3. What do staff and management believe to be the needs of the offenders and of the institution in terms of substance abuse programming?

Five focus groups were held — three with offenders, one with staff, and one with management. Those offenders who participated in the focus groups also engaged in a brief written survey to identify the topics in which they were most interested.

Several key issues emerged from the focus groups. Safety within the group setting, in terms of sharing personal vulnerability was an important issue for offenders, as were holistic healing, longer-term programming, choice and community links. Staff and management also identified safety within the group, need for longer-term programming and community links as significant concerns.

Based on the information gleaned through the focus groups, the needs assessment concluded, "There are a diverse, and sometimes

competing, range of needs and wants for an intensive substance abuse program. However, all focus group participants recognize the need for an intensive program. A program that can meet the needs of all key players will require a program design that is innovative and non-traditional."

Two important recommendations resulted from the needs assessment:

1. That an intensive substance abuse program be developed. This program would be part of a continuum of substance abuse programs within the system and would be congruent with the Substance Abuse Program for Federally Sentenced Women and the Community Component of that program.
2. That any intensive substance abuse program have in its design the following characteristics:

- inmate-centredness, individualization and empowerment;
- accessibility;
- flexibility;
- content that addresses the underlying factors of substance abuse (skill deficits, cognitive distortions, abuse, etc.); and,
- a variety of delivery modes, including facilitator-led, self-study, participant-led, and group and individual components.

The program's main focus is on behaviour change rather than solely on the use of substances.

Program design

Following the needs assessment, the Solutions program was developed to help reduce offenders' relapse into substance abuse and criminality. The program's main focus is on behaviour change rather than solely on the use of substances. Solutions uses a cognitive-behavioural approach in its presentation of five independent modules:

1. The Basics
2. Distress Tolerance
3. The Skills of Change
4. Emotions
5. Recovery Skills

Although each module builds on information presented in the previous module, they can be taken independently.

In *The Basics*, the participants learn about the model of change, the actions of drugs on the brain, the activator, the behaviour, the consequence chains that make up any kind of behaviour, the connection between trauma and addiction, and the cycle of addiction.

In *Distress Tolerance*, the participants are introduced to a variety of concrete skills that can be used for dealing with difficult situations, such as grounding and visualization techniques, breathing and distraction exercises.

In *The Skills of Change*, the participants create a vision of what they want their lives to be and begin setting goals that will help them achieve that vision. A major component of this module involves having the participants pick a behaviour they would like to change (preferably a behaviour unrelated to substance abuse) and then working through a process that helps them understand how to change habits successfully. This process includes identifying the good and not-so-good things about changing, creating a plan for change, and looking at the activators and the consequences of the behaviour they are attempting to change. Once the participants understand the processes of change and acquire skills for change, they can then apply them to their substance-using behaviours.

In the *Emotions* module, the participants are given a brief introduction to emotions and learn techniques for managing fear, anger, depression and joy.

Finally, in *Recovery Skills*, the participants learn a number of relapse-prevention strategies. They learn to identify a high-risk situation, to care for themselves, to ask for support, to deal assertively with unsupportive people, to make new friends, and to refuse drink and drug offers. In this module, the

participants are given numerous opportunities to practise the skills they learn through role-playing.

The five modules within *Solutions* are broken down into 60 two-hour workshops. Participants are given opportunities to participate in large group discussions, work in small groups or as individuals, practise new skills in role playing, and share their learning.

Along with the structured two-hour workshop, another hour is set aside each day for the participants to engage in a variety of leisure activities. This hour is called *Open Time*. The philosophy behind this component is that many women who use substances have difficulty using their leisure time in a productive manner. Ideally, each participant will choose how to spend her time during this part of the program. This component of the program provides excellent opportunities for establishing community links through guest lectures, recovery stories and so on. Other activities that could take place during this time include reading, sports, reflection, journal writing, cooking and crafts.

Solutions is set up to be delivered by two facilitators. This allows opportunity for another important component of the program — one-on-one counselling with participants during *Open Time*. During individual sessions with their facilitators, participants can clarify any questions that have arisen for them during the workshops, explore options for spending their *Open Time* constructively, deepen their understanding of what led them to their abuse of drugs, and develop healthy alternatives to drug use.

Program implementation

The participants for the pilot *Solutions* program at EIFW were carefully screened through a battery of assessment tools. Only those individuals identified as having substantial-to-severe problems with drugs and alcohol were accepted into the program. This level of addiction was determined through the administration of the Alcohol Dependence Scale, the Drug Abuse Screening Test, and the Problems Related to Drinking Scale. An intensive one-on-one interview was

also conducted with each offender who had been referred to the program and assessed as having a substantial-to-severe addiction to drugs and/or alcohol. Each participant completed a pre- and post-questionnaire that assessed personal attitudes about the effects of drug and alcohol use, levels of temptation and confidence, coping behaviors, drinking expectancy, drinking refusal self-efficacy, drinking/drug use-related locus of control, relapse attitudes and knowledge, and readiness to change.

The pilot Solutions program started on 15 February 1999, and ended on 14 May 1999. Ten women began the program; one withdrew with less than two weeks to completion. Of the remaining nine women, five successfully completed the program and four received unsuccessful completions. Overall, interest and enthusiasm in the workshops remained high throughout the 12 weeks of Solutions.

Given the nature of the institution, Open Time could not be implemented with the intended flexibility. Rather than having each participant decide individually how she wanted to spend her hour of leisure activity, the class decided together on one structured activity. Although the

women were strongly encouraged to participate in these structured leisure time activities, attendance was totally optional. This approach had limited success. Several of the women faithfully attended the optional leisure activities and appeared to enjoy and benefit from their participation. Unfortunately, those individuals who were less motivated and not capable of productively structuring their leisure time chose to return to their units during the majority of the Open Time sessions and thus experienced little growth in this area.

During the course of the program feedback data were submitted from the ten participants and the facilitators on what worked and what needed modification. At the completion of the program each participant and the facilitators were interviewed to provide program information for assessment by a substance abuse review panel. The results of this review are expected by the end of this year (1999). It is anticipated that a fully accredited, intensive substance abuse program for women will result from this review. ■

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A new resource

The Research Information Centre, Research Branch, Corporate Development, houses a wide variety of documents, research reports and other materials. The goal of the Research Information Centre is to provide easy access to research documents, as well as to other corrections-related information.

Women offenders and employment

by *Christa A. Gillis*¹

Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada

Despite the identification of employment as an important dynamic risk factor,² the topic of employment has received little empirical attention, relative to other female offender needs. In fact, until recently, employment research, theory and practice were oriented primarily toward male offenders.³ Researchers have attributed the relative lack of employment and vocational programs for female offenders to the traditional view of a woman as "guardian of home and family."⁴ Researchers have also noted that not all vocational programs are traditional in orientation⁵ and that an evaluation of programs offered during the current decade is necessary to update empirical knowledge regarding the availability of less-traditional employment programs for women.⁶ The provision of effective correctional programs that respond to the specific needs of women presents a unique set of challenges for the correctional system.

Based on the available research, the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women⁷ provided a framework for the reconceptualization of women's corrections by advocating changes in many facets of the structure, operation and philosophy of women's institutions. The report promoted enhanced community release preparation for women in education, vocational training, employment and life skills. Furthermore, in the call for meaningful employment for women, the report proposed the establishment of partnerships with the business community. Such partnering would provide long-term opportunities, advanced skills development and work experience in all aspects of a business, including trades, marketing, business management, clerical work and administration.

The need for distinctive women's programming was reiterated and made law in Section 77 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA)*.⁸ More specifically, the CCRA decrees that the Correctional Service of Canada:

a) provide programs designed particularly to address the need of female offenders; and

b) consult regularly about programs for female offenders with:

- i) appropriate women's groups, and
- ii) other appropriate persons and groups with expertise on, and experience in working with, female offenders.

The requirement to examine the specific program needs of female offenders was reinforced in the Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women.⁹ Recommendations in the *Arbour Report* accorded priority to the development of work programs that incorporate a vocational training component in women's corrections, include a pay incentive, or provide "a meaningful occupation."¹⁰ Thus, the call for meaningful work for female offenders has been identified within both reports and policy recommendations, indicating that it warrants further systematic exploration to develop comprehensive and appropriate employment strategies.

Employability

The concept of 'meaningful' employment, in the context of offenders, would imply that it addresses offender needs at an intermediate, or proximal level, as well as contributing to more long-term outcomes, including safe community reintegration. Offender employment needs are most frequently addressed through institutional employment experience and training. Within the Canadian federal correctional system, such training is incurred primarily through CORCAN, a special operating system that comprises institutional manufacturing (industries), agribusiness (farming), construction, services (e.g., keyboarding, data entry and telemarketing) and textiles operations.

The goal of employment training is to develop positive work habits that contribute to offender rehabilitation.¹¹ Consequently, in 1992, CORCAN reoriented its focus to the development and enhancement of generic employability skills, rather than specific job skills, to contribute to offender reintegration potential.¹² It is anticipated that this reorientation will provide institutional employment opportunities that cater to the development of attitudes, skills and abilities transferable to community employment situations.

CORCAN's focus on the development of employability skills is consistent with the perception of employment as a dynamic risk factor, amenable to change through effective intervention strategies. However, few studies have examined change in skills as a result of participation in employment training programs. Moreover, the limited empirical and anecdotal evidence indicates that traditionally, female offenders have not been offered the same number, variety or type of employment and vocational programs that contribute to skill development as male offenders.¹³ For instance, Morash and colleagues¹⁴ surveyed U.S. state and federal prisons to compare programs offered to male and female offenders during the 1980s. They found that female offenders were not provided with equitable employment opportunities in institutions, either in terms of potential for skill development or remuneration. Such an approach, it may be argued, contributes to the perpetuation of stereotyped employment roles for women and serves to exacerbate the obstacles faced by women in their community reintegration efforts.

Employment of female offenders in the Service

Attempts to adhere to CCRA requirements and recommendations from the Arbour report are

evident in the Service's provision of several innovative employment programs and work opportunities. Current vocational- and education-based initiatives include a canine program and horticulture program at Nova and Joliette Institutions, designed to offer therapeutic benefits to offenders, provide them with a nurturing sense, and teach them about care and responsibility. Grand Valley Institution provides training for women in informatics and hairdressing. Currently, no vocational programs are offered at Edmonton Institution, although it is examining various options.

At Edmonton Institution, however, CORCAN operates a silk screening shop, employing 11 offenders. A telemarketing operation at Joliette Institution employs 19 offenders. These types of work provide marketable skills that are readily transferable to similar positions that are typically available in the community.

Despite certain advances, the small number of women offenders presents a challenge to CORCAN. Although one of the primary mandates of CORCAN is to contribute to offender rehabilitation through the provision of employment skills, an additional objective is to sustain economic viability as a special operating agency. The challenge exists in the effort to integrate the two, sustaining the economic side, while balancing offender rights to access programs that provide the

opportunity for employment skills development and enhancement.

The emphasis on skills development has been dealt with in the *Report to EXCOM on Employment*,¹⁵ stating that institutional and community employment work should be re-examined and integrated to better address offenders' various employment needs. Future deliberations and recommendations should devote special attention to the examination of women-specific employment needs.

CORCAN's focus on the development of employability skills is consistent with the perception of employment as a dynamic risk factor, amenable to change through effective intervention strategies.

Future directions

Before developing formalized employment strategies and instituting comprehensive intervention approaches for female offenders, it would be useful to conduct a survey with incarcerated women and women on conditional release.¹⁶ It is important to obtain an enhanced understanding of women's work experience, training and skills before and during incarceration. An evaluation of women's interests in pursuing particular vocational training and employment experience should also be conducted. Thus, the research should address women's perceived employment competencies and propose strategies for overcoming impediments to obtaining and maintaining meaningful work in the community on release.

The research should attempt to gain an understanding of the type of work women define as meaningful by considering the context and unique experiences of women, consistent with the strategy espoused by the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women. This information can contribute to future program development and delivery at the institutional and community levels. Another consideration is the provision of employment training that coincides with employment opportunities in the community. This would consider the projected availability in the community of fulfilling and challenging work that provides adequate remuneration, critical to women's self-reliance and successful reintegration. Such an approach is important, as women identify finding and maintaining work in the community on conditional release as a central problem.¹⁷

Concrete employment-specific proposals to assist women on conditional release, as advocated by Shaw and colleagues, include assistance to find jobs, particularly in remote areas and with older women, and increased availability of skills and job training programs. Currently, CORCAN operates a work site in Toronto which aims to provide offenders with assistance in finding employment on release.

In Moncton, a community work site offers offenders the potential for full-time employment in an industrial setting for up to six months. Evaluation and expansion of these programs is advocated to better meet the employment needs of offenders on conditional release in other regions.

Once a strategy has been established for the implementation of employment interventions designed specifically for women, through consultation with female offenders and the appropriate stakeholders, a number of additional factors must be considered. Consistent with the risk principle,¹⁸ intensive employment interventions should be allocated to female offenders manifesting high employment needs and whose criminal

offending is related to employment deficits. Moreover, analysis of the treatment literature indicates that intervention is most effective when provided in the community.¹⁹ Although institutional employment training is important, and contributes to a reduction in reoffending rates for male offenders (relative to offenders who did not participate in such training),²⁰ it is proposed that an intensive community employment strategy be adopted for women. Employment programs should include an evaluative component to assess whether they are contributing to intermediate outcomes for women (e.g., their

perceptions of skills development and enhancement), consistent with the current focus on accreditation and program evaluation within the Service. Furthermore, women's community adjustment should be examined on release, to assess whether institutional employment programs facilitate the release process and to evaluate whether their community employment needs are met through existing structures.

Finally, given the negative impact of traditional forms of vocational and employment stereotyping on women offenders, it would be interesting to replicate and extend U.S. research²¹ to examine the influence of these

It is important to obtain an enhanced understanding of women's work experience, training and skills before and during incarceration.

stereotypical views on women offenders' perceived self-efficacy to pursue non-

traditional forms of vocational training and employment opportunities. ■

- ¹ 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9.
- ² P. Gendreau, T. Little and C. Goggin, "A meta-analysis of the predictors of adult offender recidivism: What works!," *Criminology*, 34 (1996): 575-607. See also P. Gendreau, C. Goggin and G. Gray, "Case need domain: Employment," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 10, 3 (1998): 16-19.
- ³ R. P. Dobash, R. E. Dobash and S. Gutteridge, *The Imprisonment of Women* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1986).
- ⁴ Dobash, Dobash and Gutteridge, *The Imprisonment of Women*, p. 159. See also J. M. Pollock-Byrne, *Women, Prison, and Crime* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1990). See also R. A. Weisheit, "Trends in programs for female offenders: The use of private agencies as service providers," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 29 (1985): 35-42.
- ⁵ Weisheit, "Trends in programs for female offenders: The use of private agencies as service providers."
- ⁶ M. Morash, R. N. Haarr and L. Rucker, "A comparison of programming for women and men in U.S. prisons in the 1980s," *Crime and Delinquency*, 40 (1994): 197-221.
- ⁷ Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, *Creating Choices* (Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada, 1990).
- ⁸ *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, R.S.C., C-20 (1992).
- ⁹ L. Arbour, *Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women* (Ottawa, ON: Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1996).
- ¹⁰ Arbour, *Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women*, 252.
- ¹¹ C. A. Gillis, *The Influence of Shop Supervisor Characteristics on Employee-Reported Work Attitudes in a Prison Industry Setting*, unpublished master's thesis, Department of Psychology, Carleton University, 1994. See also E. Fabiano, J. LaPlante and A. Loza, "Employability: From research to practice," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 8, 1 (1996): 25-28. See also R. Guynes and R. C. Grieser, "Contemporary prison industry goals," American Correctional Association (Ed.), *A Study of Prison Industry: History, Components, Goals* (College Park, MD: American Correctional Association, 1986): 19-29.
- ¹² Fabiano, LaPlante and Loza, "Employability: From research to practice."
- ¹³ Dobash, Dobash and Gutteridge, *The Imprisonment of Women*, 159. See also Pollock-Byrne, *Women, Prison, and Crime*. See also Weisheit, "Trends in programs for female offenders: The use of private agencies as service providers." And see B. A. Koons, J. D. Burrow, M. Morash, and T. Bynum, "Expert and offender perceptions of program elements linked to successful outcomes for incarcerated women," *Crime and Delinquency*, 43 (1997): 512-532.
- ¹⁴ Morash, Haarr and Rucker, "A comparison of programming for women and men in U.S. prisons in the 1980s."
- ¹⁵ Correctional Service of Canada, *Report to EXCOM on Employment* (Ottawa, ON: 1998).
- ¹⁶ A current research project is examining factors that contribute to community employment stability among a sample of federal offenders during their first six months of conditional release. The research is exploring how employment experience before incarceration, institutional vocational and/or employment training (CORCAN), and community employment status ultimately influence offenders' community reintegration.
- ¹⁷ M. Shaw, K. Rodgers, J. Blanchette, T. Hattem, L. S. Thomas and L. Tamarack, *The Release Study: Survey of Federally Sentenced Women in the Community*, no. 1991-5 (Ottawa, ON: Corrections Branch, Ministry of the Solicitor General, 1991).
- ¹⁸ D. A. Andrews, J. Bonta and R. D. Hoge, "Classification for effective rehabilitation: Rediscovering psychology," *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 17 (1990): 19-52. See also D. A. Andrews and J. Bonta, *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, 2nd ed. (Cincinnati, OH: Anderson, 1998).
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- ²⁰ W. G. Saylor and G. G. Gaes, "The effect of prison employment and vocational/apprenticeship training on long-term recidivism," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 8, 1 (1996): 12-14. See also M. Lipsey, "What do we learn from 400 research studies on the effectiveness of treatment with juvenile delinquents?" J. McGuire (Ed.), *What Works: Reducing Reoffending* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 1995): 63-78.
- ²¹ P. J. Schram, "Stereotypes about vocational programming for female inmates," *The Prison Journal*, 78 (1998): 244-270.

Change of address

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The problem of suicide among female prisoners

by Marc Daigle,¹ Mylène Alarie and Patrick Lefebvre

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This article summarizes a study conducted among female prisoners incarcerated in institutions for women in Quebec (two prisons and one penitentiary).² To date, there have been few studies of suicidal behaviour among female prisoners. Notwithstanding existing differences between men and women in the community in this regard, those working in prisons for women generally agree that the situation among female prisoners is very different. The purpose of our study was to evaluate the magnitude of the suicide problem among women incarcerated in Quebec in terms of the number of previous suicide attempts, the severity of the attempts and the suicide risk potential. Two tools were used in this study: the Suicide Probability Scale and the Lethality of Suicide Attempt Rating Scale.

Magnitude of the problem

Few studies address the problem of suicide among female prisoners. This is due in part to the small female prison population, but also because it is difficult to measure the magnitude of the phenomenon. The fact remains, however, that the suicide rate among female prisoners is abnormally high.³ It could well be that, as with incarcerated men, the suicide rate is about the same as the rate for female offenders living in the community.⁴

It is estimated that almost half of all female prisoners have made previous suicide attempts.⁵ Among this population, high levels of psychological distress and despair manifest themselves as self-injury and attempted suicide.⁶ In fact, one of the reasons most frequently cited by women for consulting a worker is the need to discuss their desire to harm themselves and die.⁷

In the prison environment in particular, however, clinicians are unable to agree on how to distinguish between attempted suicide and self-injury as a means of relieving stress, anxiety, depersonalization and gaining control of one's environment.⁸ It is not necessarily any easier to make this distinction at the scientific level, given that we are referring either to

intent or to severity.⁹ Intent (intention to die) is not easy to determine, especially in hindsight, mainly because of the suicidal person's ambivalence, the various levels of conscience, impulsiveness and so on. Evaluating the severity of the act may be easier, namely by identifying the means used. This approach has already been used quite successfully by Smith, Conroy and Ehler¹⁰ with their Lethality of Suicide Attempt Rating Scale (LSARS) which is based on the severity of the method used and the circumstances surrounding the attempt. This scale is one of the two best scales used to measure severity and is supported by a significant amount of empirical data.¹¹ However, in the prison environment, this approach may be biased, given that suicidal prisoners do not have access to the full arsenal of lethal means.¹²

In terms of the suicide risk, Cull and Gill's¹³ Suicide Probability Scale (SPS) can be used to determine the probability that an individual will commit the act. This instrument has been validated in Quebec by Labelle, Daigle, Pronovost and Marcotte.¹⁴ It has already been used in a study involving female prisoners in Ontario¹⁵ and men incarcerated in Quebec.¹⁶

Methodology

The purpose of our study was to assess the magnitude of the suicide problem among women incarcerated in Quebec in terms of the number of past suicide attempts, the severity of the attempts (measured using the LSARS) and suicide risk potential (measured using the SPS). We approached female inmates in three Quebec facilities (two provincial detention facilities and one federal penitentiary) responsible for ensuring the custody of female prisoners. At the time of our research, 130 women were being accommodated in the two provincial prisons; 103 were available and 60 agreed to meet with us. In the penitentiary, 67 women

were incarcerated: 50 were available and 28 agreed to participate. The participation rates (58% and 56% respectively) were deemed satisfactory and comparable with those obtained in similar studies. We met the women initially in a group; they completed the SPS and anonymously indicated whether they had attempted suicide at least once. At that time, 47 women indicated that they had made at least one attempt. Of these, 34 agreed to meet with us individually to provide additional details on their history, thus enabling us to complete the LSARS.

Most of the women in the total sample were francophones (86.4%). On average, they were 33 years old ($SD = 9$), with 11 years of education ($SD = 2$). In the provincial facilities, 28.1% of the women had been charged but not yet sentenced. No one fell into this category in the federal penitentiary, given that it accommodates only women who have been sentenced to two or more years. Taking into consideration the differences in the mandates of the institutions, the average sentence was 37 weeks ($SD = 29.6$) in the provincial facilities and 345.8 weeks ($SD = 281.1$) in the federal penitentiary. On average, the provincial clients were serving their fifth period of incarceration ($M = 5.02$; $SD = 6.7$), compared with the third ($M = 3.3$; $SD = 7$) for federal clients. This is not a significant difference.

Number of women who had already made one suicide attempt

In the provincial prisons, 60% of the women indicated that they had attempted suicide at least once, compared with 39.3% in the federal penitentiary (a barely significant difference ($p < 0.1$)). These results seem to indicate that women incarcerated in provincial facilities had had a more difficult past, even though the federally sentenced women had obviously committed more serious offences and received longer sentences. Overall, 53.4% of the women (47 of the 88 who responded) had already attempted suicide at least once, a result that is comparable with the findings of other studies (see above). This rate is clearly higher than the figures generally reported among their male counterparts; for example, 13% in England,¹⁷ 23% in two Alberta prisons¹⁸ and 30% in Quebec prisons.¹⁹ However, among women,

as among men, the situation in prisons and penitentiaries might be quite different. Upon admission to federal penitentiaries in Quebec, only 9.4% of male inmates (some of whom had been incarcerated in the past) admitted that they had attempted suicide. Moreover, for comparison purposes, it has been found that only 5% of adult students have a history of suicide attempts.²⁰ It should also be noted that in our sample of incarcerated women only seven of the 47 recent attempts had taken place in secure custody: two in a prison, three in a police station and two in a juvenile detention centre. To a certain extent, this would confirm the data from other studies that indirectly show that the problem of suicide is associated with a life of delinquency, suffering and disorganization, rather than with life in prison.

During one-on-one interviews, the women with a history of attempted suicide told us that they had attempted suicide an average of three times ($SD = 3.3$), two women had attempted suicide up to fifteen times (see Table 1). This figure was higher, but not significantly so, for the women in provincial prisons ($M = 3.3$; $SD = 3.5$) than for those incarcerated in the federal penitentiary ($M = 1.8$; $SD = 0.8$).

Severity of the attempts

Also during the one-on-one interviews, the researchers evaluated the severity of the most recent self-injury or suicide attempt to attempt to differentiate them. On average, these suicidal behaviours scored 4 ($SD = 2.8$) on the LSARS, which ranges from 0 to 10. Scores from the two types of custodial facilities were almost identical. This figure is quite high given criteria 3.5 and 5 on the scale (see Table 2). Another way to look at things is to consider the proportion of serious attempts, that is, those that scored higher than 5 on the LSARS. Overall, 29.4% of the attempts (32.1% for provincial prisons) obtained such high scores.

Suicide risk

The average suicide risk, estimated using the SPS, was 63.2 (see Table 3) for all women. Based on test standards, this score was

Table 1

Frequency of Suicide Attempts

Number of times	Number of women
1 attempt	9 women
2 attempts	13 women
3 attempts	4 women
4 attempts	4 women
5 attempts	2 women
15 attempts	2 women

For comparison purposes, only 16.2% of federally sentenced males represented a moderate or high risk (see Table 4). This figure was approximately 6% among male and female university students.²¹ Naturally, the suicide risk among incarcerated females who had already attempted suicide at least once was much higher; 53.2% of them represented a moderate or high risk (see Table 5).

Conclusion

The data we collected on women who had already attempted suicide at least once was already an indication of the magnitude of the problem. However, the majority of these attempts took place somewhere other than a penal institution, hence the need to recognize that this problem is not unique to the system. Individuals who end up in prison are already part of a group with a high suicide risk.²² Moreover, several of these women had attempted suicide numerous times, thus supporting the hypothesis that the attempts may be a cry for help. This by no means implies that the behaviour might be self-injury of no significance; in fact, at least 29% of the attempts could have been fatal (that is, they scored between 6 and 10 on the LSARS).

Generally speaking, the research also revealed that female inmates, especially those in the provincial

system (serving short sentences or awaiting sentencing) are at a higher risk than male inmates and the general population. Based on the benchmarks of the SPS, 39% of the women (and perhaps as high as 48% at the provincial level) should be referred for clinical assessment. However, our research did not allow us to verify whether they had, in fact, eventually been clinically assessed within the framework of the various screening processes

Table 2

Benchmark Criteria for the Severity of Suicide Attempts (LSARS)

- 3.5 Death is improbable so long as first aid is administered by victim or other agent. Victim usually makes a communication or commits the act in a public way or takes no measures to hide self or injury.
- 5.0 Death is a fifty-fifty probability directly or indirectly, or in the opinion of the average person, the chosen method has equivocal outcome.
- 7.0 Death is the probable outcome unless there is "immediate" and "vigorous" first aid or medical attention by victim or other agent.

Table 3

Level of Suicide Risk — Comparison Between Federal and Provincial Institutions

	Provincial	Federal	TOTAL
Total score	65.2 (7.3)	58.9 (9.2)	63.2 (8.4)*
Risk:			*
sub-clinical	10.0%	40.7%	19.5%
low	43.3%	37.0%	41.4%
moderate	35.0%	11.1%	27.6%
high	11.7%	11.1%	11.5%

* $p < .01$

assessed as fairly high; the score for women incarcerated in a provincial prison was even higher (significant difference). Moreover, based on these test standards, 39.1% of the women should have been referred to a clinician, given that a moderate suicide risk was identified among 27.6% of them and a high suicide risk among 11.5%. In the provincial system, 46.7% of the women should have been referred to a clinician (equally significant difference).

Table 4

Level of Suicide Risk — Comparisons with Other Groups

	Female Inmates	Male Inmates	Female Students	Male Students
Sub-clinical risk	19.5%	31.7%	57.6%	63.6%
Low risk	41.4%	52.2%	36.8%	30.3%
Moderate risk	27.6%	12.4%	4.9%	6.1%
High risk	11.5%	3.8%	0.7%	0.0%

Table 5

Level of Suicide Risk — Comparisons Between Women with and without a History of Attempted Suicide

	History of Attempted Suicide	No History of Attempted Suicide
Sub-clinical risk	4.3%	37.5%
Low risk	42.6%	40.0%
Moderate risk	36.2%	17.5%
High risk	17.0%	5.0%

Note: All values $p < .001$

in place in federal and provincial institutions. In any case, whether or not screening or intervention took place, the continued existence of the problem seems obvious. This leads us back to our earlier observation: these clients are at risk, whether or not they are incarcerated, as demonstrated by the fact that they have, in many cases, attempted suicide more than once in several different environments. Moreover, one should not ignore the fact that these clients may have personality disorders. ■

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² The authors wish to thank the female prisoners at Maison Tanguay (Montreal), the Detention Centre for Women (Orsainville) and Joliette Institution who bestowed their trust. They also wish to thank managers and workers with the Quebec Department of Public Security and the Correctional Service of Canada for their ongoing cooperation.

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Criminal lunatic women in 19th century Canada¹

by Kathleen Kendall²

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The new lodgings held much promise for the three women. Nestled between Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence Valley, with the city of Kingston nearby, the women could perhaps temporarily forget the crimes and emotional turbulence bringing them to this place. As a laboratory for the scientific study of criminal insanity, it may even offer a cure for their mental distress. However, if the first occupants of the new Criminal Lunatic Asylum at Rockwood ever held out such hope, it was likely shattered once inside the asylum itself. The beauty of the lake and the bustle of the city remained far away from their nine-foot by five-foot cells, illuminated only by the light escaping from the barred peepholes. Although grand in its previous incarnation as a horse stable, the stone building was unsuitable for human occupants, much less so for those in need of refuge. Nonetheless, for the next 11 years, over 50 women occupied these stables. A few of the lucky ones were discharged as "recovered" while the unfortunate majority either met their deaths in these stables or were transferred to other asylums.

As the first institution constructed specifically for "criminal lunatics," the Rockwood Asylum holds an important place in Canadian penal history. This article briefly considers the circumstances leading up to the creation of the asylum and examines key moments during the 20-year period from 1857 to 1877, after which the asylum admitted only criminal lunatics whose sentences had expired. The focus is largely on female prisoners because they were the ones initially housed in the asylum and were also the most marginalized.

In the beginning

Criminal lunatics became recognized as a unique group only in the 19th century.³ Prior to this time, criminals, the insane and debtors were all confined together in jails. However, early Canadians soon found that jails were becoming overcrowded and were increasingly concerned about the changes associated with urbanization, industrialization, and immigration. In response to these social forces, reformers began to employ scientific methods, including classification, as a means of re-establishing order and control. The separation of criminals and lunatics was

part of this endeavour, achieved through the creation of two institutions of great significance: the Kingston Penitentiary in 1835, and the temporary Lunatic Asylum at Toronto in 1841. A permanent asylum, the Provincial Lunatic Asylum was completed in 1851.⁴

Criminal lunatics soon proved troublesome to both the penitentiary and the asylum. Because of their emotional and sometimes physical outbursts, they disrupted the disciplinary regime underlying the penitentiary. More importantly, however, criminal lunatics were a philosophical conundrum. They were considered a contradiction in terms "inasmuch as the word *Criminal* obviously implies a knowledge of evil, while the word *Lunatic* as evidently implies an utter absence of that knowledge [*italics in original*]."⁵ Female criminal lunatics were an even greater enigma regarding moral agency, since the sexual ideology at the time maintained that women were inherently virtuous and innocent. The fusion of insanity, criminality and femininity appeared incongruent. In transgressing the boundaries of classification, criminal lunatic women disrupted attempts to maintain order and control.

As categorical anomalies, female criminal lunatics fitted into neither the asylum nor the penitentiary. However, since this group contained elements of criminality and lunacy, they belonged in both institutions. Consequently, they were shuffled back and forth between institutions and were wanted by neither. The animosity and vitriol directed at criminal lunatics finally resulted in the establishment of a temporary criminal lunatic asylum within the penitentiary in 1855. In response to the "evils arising from the reception of insane criminals at the [Provincial Lunatic] Asylum," Attorney General Sir John A. MacDonald recommended that the "portion of the Provincial Penitentiary...be fitted up for the reception of the criminal lunatics in the

Asylum, now 21 in number, as well as for those at present confined in the several County Gaols of Upper Canada." MacDonal also suggested that provision would be needed "for the separation of the sexes."⁶ In his letter to one of the penitentiary inspectors, the warden echoed this last concern. "There must be a positive decision as to female convicts as they cannot be confined within the same prisons as the male lunatics, there not being any place for them."⁷

The issue was resolved by the inspector's decision that "...after a very careful examination of the Penitentiary there is no possibility of making a proper place for female lunatics and would therefore recommend that none of this class be forwarded to this institution."⁸ The success of the inspector's decision is apparent in the warden's smug reply: "... we are rid of the females which is quite satisfactory."⁹ Consequently, when the Criminal Lunatic Asylum finally opened in June 1855, there were no females among its occupants. Female criminal lunatics remained in the Provincial Lunatic Asylum until their transfer to the horse stables at Rockwood in 1857. The Act creating the Criminal Lunatic Asylum at Rockwood stated that the following classes of people were to be admitted into it:

- 1st Convicts in the penitentiary becoming insane while under sentence there.
- 2nd Certain classes of lunatics committed to jail as lunatics dangerous to be at large.
- 3rd Persons charged with some offence of which they had been acquitted on the ground that they were insane at the time such offence was committed.
- 4th Persons indicted for any offence, and upon arraignment thereof found, by a jury especially impanelled for the purpose, to be insane.¹⁰

Creating the Rockwood Lunatic Asylum

The new establishment served originally as an estate, owned by John Cartwright. Following Cartwright's death, a physician named John Palmer Litchfield rented the Rockwood villas a private asylum.¹¹ Litchfield was eventually appointed medical superintendent of the temporary criminal lunatic asylum in the Kingston Penitentiary.¹² It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that in July 1856, the

Crown purchased 35 acres of the Rockwood Estate to establish a permanent asylum for criminal lunatics. Just as the penitentiary warden was relieved to rid himself of the female criminal lunatics, so too was the medical superintendent of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum glad to have this group removed from his establishment. Superintendent Joseph Workman was not afraid to show his aversion to criminal lunatics. For example, in his first annual report, he referred to criminal lunatics as "moral monsters."¹³ This might partially explain why the women were sent to Rockwood before the architect had even finished his plans for the asylum.¹⁴

Although the new asylum building was not completed until 1870, men began as early as 1862 to occupy those parts of it that were considered inhabitable.¹⁵ Male prisoners were sporadically admitted into the finished parts of the building as the work progressed.¹⁶ Women, however, remained in the stables until 1868.

The social reformer Henry Hurd painted a stark illustration of the stables:

This substitute for an asylum was arranged with single rooms for 20 inmates, while a wooden addition made thereto comprised "four strong walls," a "keeper's room" and a dining room, beyond which again was a kitchen. The size of the single rooms was 9 feet by 5 feet. They were lighted by miserable little barred peep-holes, measuring only 18 inches by 12 inches. The entrance was on the west side, and a small hallway was used as an office.¹⁷

Dowell's depiction of the stables is no less horrific: "human contact was minimal, as the women were shut in by one and one-quarter-inch thick doors six feet high and two feet wide. Food was shoved into the nine-foot by five-foot cells through a slit in the door."¹⁸ Given this portrait, the following poem, conceived during Cartwright's ownership of the estate, can only be read with a sense of irony:

Oh, would to God! That I were able
To build a house like Cartwright's stable.
It fills my heart with great remorse
To be worse housed than Cartwright's
horse.¹⁹

The recollections of a former employee of the asylum, Mr. Evans, provides more information about the conditions in which the women lived. According to Evans, the beds were made of straw ticks and pillows; and the walls and ceilings were "whitewashed with lime." He further notes that Dr. Litchfield was the only physician at the time.²⁰ Litchfield's treatment relied heavily upon "a pretty free use of alcohol by day and of sedative at night."²¹ Along with restraint, other methods of choice included blood letting, leeching, enemas and blistering.²²

Litchfield was also clear that successful therapy hinged on the careful observation and classification of patients along with the establishment of a trusting relationship with them.²³ Fundamentally, he maintained that criminal lunatics were no more dangerous or violent than other lunatics and, therefore, should be treated like ordinary patients. This argument formed Litchfield's recommendation that the asylum become open to non-criminals. He was concerned that non-criminals were being unjustly charged with criminal offences in order that they be admitted into the asylum. Family and friends were using this method as a means of avoiding sending their loved ones to the Provincial Lunatic Asylum in Toronto, some distance away. The government accepted Litchfield's proposal and the asylum became open to non-criminals in 1868.

Unfortunately, Litchfield died soon thereafter. His successor, Dr. Dickson, was adamantly opposed to the mixing of criminals and non-criminals. Dickson argued that the two classes must be kept apart: "...the criminal and non-criminal classes of lunatics should never, under any circumstances, be admitted for treatment to the same building; they should never be permitted to commingle, as one vicious criminal is sufficient to contaminate a whole wardfull."²⁴ Dickson supported his motion on the grounds that the stigma associated with the criminal population prevented families and friends from sending their innocent relations to Rockwood. However, this argument is groundless because the asylum was filled to capacity and there were few criminal lunatics left among its population. Indeed, only 10% of the female population and 29% of the

male population between 1856 and 1877 were criminal lunatics. The great majority of the population had not committed criminal offences but were instead considered to be "dangerous at large."²⁵

Despite the lack of evidence, the government was convinced by Dickson's argument and in 1877 the Rockwood Asylum stopped admitting criminals apart from those whose sentences had expired. On 30 June 1877, 22 criminal lunatics were transferred from Rockwood to the Kingston Penitentiary. Only one, Sophia Boisclair, was female.²⁶

Historical legacy of Rockwood

The hostility, scorn and neglect that was typically attached to female criminal lunatics cannot be explained by the danger they posed. Preliminary analysis of case records and other primary data indicate that female criminal lunatics were no more dangerous than "ordinary" ones.²⁷ The great majority of their crimes were non-violent and, once inside the asylum, they did not engage in a disproportionate amount of violence. Female criminal lunatics did, however, threaten to disrupt the new management technique of classification because they did not fit neatly within existing categories.

The binary logic underlying the notion that criminals were responsible for their actions while lunatics were not, led to a philosophical impasse. Criminal lunatic women further exacerbated this predicament because Victorian sexual ideology undermined the moral agency of females. In attempting to restore social order, Victorian reformers employed methods of social classification. However, this process invariably failed to capture the complexities of human experience. In transgressing categorical divides, female criminal lunatics exposed the limitations of science and the broader project of achieving social order and control. Consequently, a variety of fears and social anxieties were projected upon them. As Faith, Boritch and Hannah-Moffat have argued, this historical legacy remains embedded within the bedrock of Canadian penal practice.²⁸ ■

- ¹ The author would like to thank Clive Webb; Shell Cooper-Stephenson; Barb and Caspar vanBaal; David St. Onge, the Correctional Service of Canada Museum; George Henderson, Queen's University Archives; the staff of Archives of Ontario; Roanne Mokhtar and George deZwann, National Archives of Canada; Karen Gagnon, Kingston Psychiatric Hospital Staff Library; and Cynthia Cochrane and Thea Miller, Archives of the History of Canadian Psychiatry and Mental Health Services.
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Maximum security women: “Not letting the time do you”

by Donna McDonagh¹

Health Services, Correctional Service of Canada

It's about not letting the time do you. I really believe if you don't change your attitude a bit and come down and balance with the institution then you're really not going to get anywhere — you're just going to be banging your head up against the wall — letting the time do you — because you're not going to get any answers. But if you're willing to change your attitude a little bit and discuss what the problem is — tell them what the problem is — and try and solve it and find different choices and different ways of solving the problem — then the problem is going to get solved. If you think to yourself that you don't have an attitude and you don't have the problem then you're never going to get anywhere. You have to realize that some of the problem lies within you also.

— Alison²

This article summarizes a few key findings taken from a study sponsored by the Correctional Service of Canada.³ Through this qualitative study, the perspectives and experiences of non-Aboriginal maximum security women⁴ and the staff who work with these women were explored. The purpose of this study was to help identify interventions necessary to suitably address the issues and needs of maximum security women and facilitate the reduction of maximum security classification of female offenders.⁵ The present article is limited to describing the heterogeneity of this population and to presenting some points regarding security classification reduction identified by the women offenders.

Methodology

In February 1998, voluntary interviews were conducted with 14 of the 15 women in the non-Aboriginal maximum security population.⁶

Data for the study were also gathered from discussions held with 20 Service staff in personal interviews and focus groups, and from supplementary meetings with psychologists and program delivery officers.

A qualitative methodology was used because this best suited the small size of the population under study and most appropriately reflected the purpose of the research. Qualitative

methods emphasize the importance of exploring an individual's subjective experiences and her understanding of the events in her life; in short, emphasizing meaning over measurement.

It is, however, important to emphasize that the findings of this study must be interpreted with caution and in relation to the particular context of the study participants. The necessity of giving careful consideration to the findings is due to the small number of study participants, the fact that this is a relative population in time, and a reliance on self-reports, which are susceptible to the possibility of interviewees' biases.

Heterogeneity of population

One of the most important findings of this study is the heterogeneity of this non-Aboriginal maximum security female population.

To consider this population as homogeneous is misleading and problematic. The extent to which this population is heterogeneous is illustrated in the responses of the women and staff, which are often clearly differentiated in terms of sub-populations.

Consistent with Warner's⁷ three “constellations of special needs” groups, this population is most readily differentiated on the basis of the following three identifiable, *but not mutually exclusive*, sub-populations:

The purpose of this study was to help identify interventions necessary to suitably address the issues and needs of maximum security women and facilitate the reduction of maximum security classification of female offenders.

- 1) those with antisocial behaviour and criminal attitudes;
- 2) those with special needs resulting from serious emotional and mental health issues; and
- 3) those with special needs resulting from cognitive limitations and basic skill deficits.

It is important to emphasize that these constructions are useful for understanding broad differences in the issues, needs, treatment and management of the maximum security female population, but any such consideration must be done with caution, recognizing these constructions as subjective, fluid and contextual.

With respect to the above sub-populations, data from this study support several conclusions. First, although maximum security women in each of the above sub-populations should be considered as having special (and high) needs of one sort or another, the needs of the women in the latter two sub-populations are extraordinarily high. Second, these sub-populations require separate programming and accommodation. This latter conclusion was supported both in the responses of the staff and of the women offenders, as illustrated in the following excerpts from women offenders. To varying degrees, the offenders in this study differentiated the sub-populations and corresponding institutional requirements in the way of care and intervention, often also expressing their frustration and concern with situations of proximity.

There's so many different personalities — normal population they call it — are ones who can interact well with others and who get along well with others — the SNU [Special Needs Unit] is mostly for girls that have extreme behavioural problems — or a lot of emotional problems where they can't deal with being around a lot of people and stuff like that. I don't think that they should give that up because I really feel like in order to be able to adjust and to be able to rehabilitate yourself you have to be in an environment that's going to be comfortable for you — if you're a SNU inmate and you're in population and you're all paranoid and you don't know who's going to beat you up or who's going to do this — it's going to cause problems whether anybody's beating you up or anything because you're going to be paranoid all the time — people are going to end

up going to seg [segregation] — there's always going to be conflict there. I think that because a lot of times girls in SNU or whatever, they really can't do much for themselves. I think they need a lot more patience, they need constant attention — you know, depending on other inmates to give them constant attention, to clean up after them causes tension, too — where there really is no need of it. (Alison)

Well, I'm not comfortable with [the other inmates]. I wish it were separate, like, so that I don't even have to see them. I just don't trust them, I'd have anxiety attacks. (Melissa)

There's a lot of different types — there's people who are normal population and there's people who are really special, special need. I'm considered as high special needs, and then there are people who are just low special needs. (Tina)

I don't want to be on programs. Cause they are too hard for me to answer the questions — and I'm not like them [other inmates] — I only have grade five education. The girls on the other side get me upset. They're smarter than I am. They like to pick on me to get me upset so I do stupid things. I feel much more better when nobody gets me upset. (Clara)

Classification reduction issues

Among the issues identified by the women regarding security classification reduction were the following four points: periodic ambivalence to reducing their security level; responsibility for security class reduction is shared between the inmate and the Service; exhibiting good institutional behaviour was important; and staff interactions affected their security level both positively and negatively in a very significant manner.

Periodic ambivalence. More than three quarters of the maximum security women stated that there had been periods when they were not interested in reducing their maximum security level or had actively engaged in behaviours to achieve or maintain maximum security. Clearly this finding broadly differentiates the challenges associated with managing women who are complacent regarding their higher security classification from issues associated with assisting women motivated to reduce their security level.

I don't care really — I just would like to get out when it's time to go. (Kim)

I assaulted staff. I wanted to stay here to be with my girlfriend because she was maximum security. (Chris)

I never, ever saw it as an achievable goal until probably three or four months ago. But now that I see it as an achievable goal, it's worth giving it the initiative to try and reach. (Kerry)

Shared responsibility. Most women view the responsibility of reducing their maximum security levels as shared between the individual woman and the Service. Changing behaviour and attitude and following one's correctional plan were seen as the individual woman's responsibility, while offering appropriate programming, presenting a willingness to alter one's perceptions of inmates, and recognizing an inmate's attempts at change were seen as the primary responsibility of staff.

Both. Definitely both. All the psychologists and all the guards and all the case management officers — they can't do it unless you're willing to do it. But once you're willing to do it they have to meet you half way. If you're showing effort, then I think that they should really recognize it. (Kerry)

I think everyone should have an input into it, you know? I think that you have like a meeting — and you discuss things — because a lot of women have factors that case management might not know about — and it could be important, you know. (Tanya)

Institutional behaviour. Exhibiting good institutional behaviour was identified by all women as an important factor in the reduction of security classification. This was explained in terms of staying charge-free, being respectful of staff and inmates, having a positive attitude, not being reactionary, and being consistent. Other important factors identified included women "doing their own time," focusing on their own issues, distancing themselves from a guard-inmate mentality, and not being discouraged by, or upset with, institutional decisions. Moreover, as the title of this article

suggests, becoming positively involved in how one "does her time" is considered central in changing the behaviour and attitudes necessary to reduce security level.

...the big thing is your behaviour — violent outbursts, of course you're going to be maximum — dirty urinalysis, attitude, if you're not being productive, if you're not going to work, if you're not participating in programs, integrating with other inmates very well — I think that keeps you max. My attitude change is what really helped me. I guess the light bulb went on and I said, "Something has to change. I have to really start working on my problems because I've been [fooling] myself." I really wasn't keying into what my problem was — and that was deal with your alcohol issues, deal with anger problem, deal with things. And I remember, I knocked on the door — and CO2 [primary worker] was in the office and I just said, you know, I said to her, "Can you please help me get out of prison?" I said, "I really want to — I'm really ready to change." I guess I just got sick and tired of everything, sick and tired of my behaviour, sick and tired of the reactions I was getting, everything I was trying to do, and then when you start changing your attitude it begins to fit together, and when I began the change inside, everything started to make sense. I never developed [received] a charge. (Alison)

Exhibiting good institutional behaviour was identified by all women as an important factor in the reduction of security classification.

Well, I think that if I stopped threatening people — hitting people — did the programs, go to the gym with the girls. If they see me participating, doing things, then I think that that would help. (Tanya)

Staff interactions. All women emphasized that staff interactions had a significant effect on their security level, both positively and negatively. Without a doubt, inmate-staff relations form the cornerstone of women's experiences inside the prison. The women have recognized and communicated that if this cornerstone is well-cemented — that is, if inmate-staff relations are open, genuine, consistent, respectful and empowering — there is, in turn, a positive impact on their attitude, behaviour and adjustment. The opposite, in turn, has negative repercussions.

The women perceived negative staff attitudes as being disrespectful, intimidating, diminishing their sense of self, frustrating them and sometimes being deliberately provocative. Ultimately, the consequences of negative inmate–staff interactions can result in conflict and charges.

The negative [staff] attitudes frustrate me — they really frustrate me. Because it makes me feel like worthless, you know, and like that they're better than I am. It's just not — like, a lot of the way that you talk to a person, makes them feel a whole lot differently — the way you approach a person and the way you talk to them. If you're just going to snap at someone, well that's not going to make them feel very good. (Chris)

Positive inmate–staff interactions were identified by both the female offenders and staff as integral to a positive institutional environment as well as to the women's positive institutional adjustment and changes in their behaviours and attitudes. The women identified the following factors as particularly important in developing positive inmate–staff interactions: open communication between inmates and staff; zero tolerance of inappropriate and deliberately provocative behaviours on the part of staff; positive reinforcement and encouragement from staff, including staff changes in behaviour consistent with inmate changes; regular staff on the unit; and a consistent supervisory style that is present, accessible and responsive to individual needs.

It's all in the way that the staff interact with you, without having to push [you] over for this or that. There's a common respect there — they respect us, we respect them, it goes both ways. I have learned that just because someone wears a uniform doesn't mean that they're my enemy. And I never, ever felt that [before] — never, ever, you know. It's all in the interaction — staff–inmate — it works, it works. It really helps. All it takes is, you know, for them to deal with things a little differently. They deal with us a

little differently, we deal with them differently. We get closer and closer to meeting in the middle, yeah. (Kerry)

What was helpful? That as I changed, the staff seemed to change their attitude toward me. Because if they had stayed the same then it would have been frustrating on top of thinking that this doesn't work either, what do I do? I probably would have felt like I was in purgatory there and I wasn't going anywhere. But I noticed that they were changing their attitude toward me — so I said, oh, okay now I get it — give respect and I get respect back — and I do get it — sometimes there's glitches here and there — but that's no big deal, that's the way life is you know, there's always ups and downs — deal with it. I think that if they [staff] see that you're trying to help yourself and they see that you're doing good, they give you credit for it, they'll take you aside or wherever and they'll just say, "We really think that you handled this really well and we're really proud of the way you're doing this or proud of the way you're doing that." That makes a big difference. (Alison)

Positive inmate–staff interactions were identified by both the female offenders and staff as integral to a positive institutional environment as well as to the women's positive institutional adjustment and changes in their behaviours and attitudes.

In correctional settings, structured, predictable and safe confinement is central to positive inmate–staff interactions. When these conditions are met and when supervision is attentive and consistent, female offenders clearly know what is expected of them and are able to concentrate their efforts on themselves. Furthermore, the presence of a predictable and, relatively speaking, safe environment lessens the risk

of psychological decompensation with corresponding clinical and management problems.

In conclusion, this article affords a glimpse at a larger qualitative research initiative that seeks to augment understanding of the personal and institutional realities of non-Aboriginal maximum security women. Findings from this research support an appreciation of the deep complexity of the challenges in understanding

and managing non-Aboriginal maximum security female offenders. The research also offers insight in how to assist these women in

reducing their security classification level, stressing the necessity for intensive, creative and unique solutions. ■

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² To protect anonymity, pseudonyms were given to each of the inmates interviewed and certain identifying information has been omitted or altered in excerpts taken from participants' accounts and presented in this research. Text placed in square brackets ([]) indicates editorial information added by the researcher.

³ D. McDonagh, *Federally Sentenced Women Maximum Security Interview Project: "Not Letting the Time Do You"* (Ottawa: Correctional Service of Canada, 1999).

⁴ Maximum security inmates are those who receive ratings indicative of a high probability of escape and a high risk to the safety of the public in the event of escape or a requirement for a high degree of supervision and control of the inmate's activities within the institution.

⁵ In September 1996, an interim decision was made to remove all maximum security women from the Service's new regional facilities for women because the community-living design of the regional facilities was not meeting the needs

of this population either in terms of security or programming and the enhanced units at the regional facilities were designed for short-term stays, not long-term accommodation. Since then, maximum security women have been regionally accommodated at the Prison for Women (Ontario) or in separate and distinct units at existing facilities for men: Saskatchewan Penitentiary, Regional Psychiatric Centre — Prairies (Saskatchewan), Regional Reception Centre (Quebec) and Springhill Institution (Nova Scotia). In the Pacific Region, all female inmates are accommodated at the Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women under an Exchange of Services Agreement.

⁶ These women were housed at either the Prison for Women in Kingston, Ontario, or at Springhill Institution in Nova Scotia. (There were no non-Aboriginal maximum security women in Saskatchewan or Quebec.) A separate study was conducted by SkyBlue Morin (January 1999) for federally sentenced Aboriginal women classified as maximum security.

⁷ A. Warner, *Implementing Choices at Regional Facilities: Program Proposals for Women Offenders with Special Needs* (Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada, 1998).

Coming up in the January 2000 issue of *Forum on Corrections Research*

The January 2000 issue of FORUM will focus on "Aboriginal Offenders".

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