

FORUM

on Corrections Research

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Featured issues

**Women
offenders**

Perspectives

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Larry Motiuk, Ph.D.
Director General — Research Branch
Correctional Service of Canada
340 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0P9

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Please contact:

Research Branch
Correctional Service of Canada
340 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0P9

Facsimile: (613) 941-8477
E-mail: research@csc-scc.gc.ca

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Kelley Blanchette
Kelly Taylor

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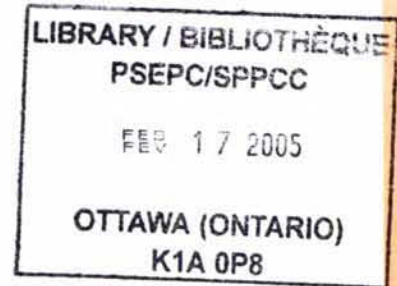
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Larry Motiuk, Ph.D.
Director General, Research Branch
Correctional Operations and Programs
Correctional Service of Canada
340 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9
Fax: (613) 941-8477

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Managing maximum security women in Federal Corrections 1989-2004

Lisa Watson, Acting Director General, Women Offender Sector¹
Correctional Service of Canada

This article recounts the history of interventions with maximum security women in the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) since 1989. During the mid-1990s the policy environment was moving very quickly and CSC had to adjust and manage its response as new facts and information emerged. As this is a complex story and space is limited, only the major highlights are included.

Background

In 1989, Commissioner Ole Ingstrup, Correctional Service of Canada, commissioned a Task Force to study the management of federal women offenders from admission to warrant expiry.

The report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women², 'Creating Choices' was tabled and accepted by the Government of Canada in September 1990, and serves to this day as the conceptual foundation for women's corrections in Canada.

In 1992, the Operational Plan for the Regional Institutions was developed, attempting to put a framework to the Task Force's ideas. It was determined that approximately 10% of women offenders required enhanced security measures and proposed the construction of an "Enhanced Unit" at each site to house women classified at the maximum security level as well as newly admitted inmates. During the construction phase of the new institutions and following court challenges by women wishing to remain close to their home communities, CSC decided that women offenders from the Prairie Region would remain out west and in 1994 a unit at the Regional Psychiatric Centre (RPC) in Saskatoon was opened. Despite CSC and staff efforts, incidents continued to occur (i.e., assaults, self-injurious behaviour), and it became evident that the problem was not, simply, the environment of Prison For Women (PFW). In April 1994, four staff were seriously assaulted by six women offenders at PFW. This incident and the subsequent management of the women inmates over the following weeks, resulted in the Solicitor General appointing Madam Justice Louise Arbour to investigate the situation.

The development of the Enhanced Units

As a result of the PFW incident, CSC determined that the proposed Enhanced Units needed to have sufficient capacity as it would be inappropriate to place newly admitted women offenders with women who are acting out (particularly those using instrumental violence, i.e., violence as a way to gain benefits); some form of additional static security would be required. During the early attempts to develop a model to manage women using instrumental violence, the Executive Committee (ExCom)³ decided to increase the capacity of the Enhanced Units to 42 cells nationally, redesign the Units into two wings and include a permanent staff post. Twenty cells (9% of the then inmate population of 220) would be of traditional, non-combustible design. The remaining wing would have regular rooms for reception inmates.

Researching the problem

Between the fall of 1994 and March 1996, several reports were completed by outside consultants in order to better understand the needs of this small group of women offenders. In February 1995 two literature reviews were finalised: *Women's Anger and Other Emotions* (Judy Crump) and *Understanding Violence by Women* (Margaret Shaw and Sheryl Dubois). On the basis of these reviews, in July 1995, CSC held a brainstorming session with external experts. This session⁴ led to the development of a potential pilot program to address the unique needs of women offenders. While this program was completed in March 1996, it was superseded by the findings of the "Rivera Report"⁵. The program was also considered both too resource heavy for the Enhanced Units and required an expansion of the Primary Workers' role into that of a quasi-therapist, which is an awkward fit for corrections. As such, it was never implemented.

In October 1995, the "Whitehall Report"⁶ was tabled, focusing on the needs of women in the Atlantic Region. It recommended a unit similar to the current Structured Living Environment houses (8-bed, specialised units for women with mental health problems) and an accommodation option in a psychiatric hospital for

the small group of inmates with significant mental health needs. The report also demonstrated that further in-depth reviews of the mental health needs of women offenders (see *Rivera Report* below) was required. However, the conviction that the new environment of the regional institutions would have a positive impact on the behaviour and mental health of the women remained a powerful assumption.

The Arbour Commission

In August 1995, the fact-finding phase of the Arbour Commission began, focusing on the April 1994 events at PFW. It was followed in November 1995 by the policy phase — round table discussions with CSC and external experts to assess CSC's policy development for the new institutions which was already underway. In general, Justice Arbour felt CSC's new policy framework for women offenders was on the right track. The Arbour report, the *Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women in Kingston*, was officially released in March 31, 1996.

Openings of the new Institutions

While the Arbour Commission was taking place in Kingston, the new institutions were preparing to open. Between November and December 1995, Nova Institution for Women (Nova), Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge (OOHL) and Edmonton Institution for Women (EIFW) opened.

EIFW experienced the most difficulty. During January to April 1996, self-injury by a number of inmates, two attempted suicides, two serious assaults on staff, and the apparent suicide of an inmate (though in May it was classified as a homicide and two inmates were later convicted) and seven (7) escapes from EIFW occurred. Staff, many of whom were new to the Service, were overwhelmed, not only by the incidents themselves but also by the unrelenting media attention. Following these events, the Commissioner ordered all medium and maximum security women removed from EIFW⁷. Until a review of the events could be done and until it was determined what changes were required nationally to ensure the safety of the public, staff and women inmates it was decided that women classified at the maximum security level would no longer be housed in the regional institutions.

The Rivera Report

During this same period, January to March 1996, Dr. Margo Rivera was interviewing 29 inmates identified by staff and conducting detailed inmate file reviews as well as case discussions with staff. Her conclusions (March 1996) became relevant to understanding the contextual framework of the events

at EIFW, which were ongoing during her study. Dr. Rivera clarified that a certain component of the inmate population required both a secure environment and long-term intervention/treatment for needs which pre-existed their incarceration and which could be exacerbated by certain aspects of their incarceration. She also indicated that some of this group of women would engage in treatment while others would not be interested or not capable. As such, CSC would have to devise a safe environment for at least three distinct sub-groups of women inmates.

Consultation with external stakeholders on the *Rivera Report* took place in June 1996. Concern was raised about pathologising women by describing any form of violence as a mental illness rather than focusing on the environment; however, this was balanced by Dr Rivera's conclusions (above). On the other hand, the Enhanced Units would not be an appropriate environment for the long-term accommodation of this population.

"Healing houses" at each institution were recommended, but it was also believed that any attempt to implement these houses when the institutions were just beginning to establish the new correctional model would result in failures even more dramatic than the series of incidents at EIFW. As it was still open, PFW was supported as a site for a pilot project and in September 1996, also in response to a recommendation of the *Rivera Report*, the RPC began the *Intensive Healing Program*. It remains operational to this day.

The *Rivera Report* was the first documented, credible review which demonstrated that the assumptions underlying CSC's understanding of women offenders' violence as first articulated in *Creating Choices* and in the subsequent work, needed to be re-examined.

Aftermath of the Arbour report and the EIFW incidents

On June 20, 1996, Ole Ingstrup, returned to CSC as Commissioner and Nancy Stableforth, was appointed the first Deputy Commissioner for Women. Their priority was to find short and long term solutions to the situation of the maximum security women.

The women classified at the maximum security level could not be returned to the regional institutions, and until a comprehensive plan could be developed, few options remained. In August and September 1996, CSC began to open small units for women in men's institutions (at Saskatchewan Penitentiary and Springhill Institution). During this time, perimeter and other static security measures were being

enhanced at EIFW and Nova and would be added prior to the January 1997 opening of Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVIW) and Joliette Institution. In May 1997, a women's unit was opened at the Regional Reception Centre in Quebec.

Plans to close the Prison for Women were proceeding. The women at PFW were to be moved to a co-located unit at the Regional Treatment Centre (RTC) across the street, however, four women launched a Habeas Corpus application in an attempt to prevent their transfer. As result, Mr. Justice Cosgrove ordered that the women "not be moved during the period of the adjournment of the habeas corpus application." PFW remained open.

In December 1997, CSC decided not to open the RTC unit and PFW remained operational for maximum security women in the Ontario Region. Instead, staff from RTC crossed the street and implemented an intensive mental health program at PFW. Mr. Justice Cosgrove then ordered that CSC not establish a maximum security unit for women in the RTC. CSC announced that PFW would remain open and would move away from using the units in men's institutions.

The Intensive Intervention Strategy

During late 1996 and well into 1997, numerous suggestions were made to resolve the issue of the co-located units, however, CSC decided to focus on interventions to assist women to quickly achieve their medium security status (e.g., reclassification reviews were done every 3 months), to improve programs, and to get the RPC program on track. Various options were suggested in order to move away from co-located units, such as: purpose-built units adjacent to men's institutions; purpose-built units at women's institutions (on the grounds but separate, stand alone units); expand the Enhanced Units; one central facility; east-west facilities (stand-alone); buy an existing facility; share a facility with a province. CSC also sought counsel from both the Human Rights Law Section at the Department of Justice and from its Legal Services Unit on the possible *Charter* risks and on gender equality of the various accommodation options.

In December 1997, ExCom reviewed all options; however, it was also time to talk to the women themselves. Two external contractors were hired to interview the maximum security women to help identify interventions that would address their specific needs. Two very different reports with similar conclusions resulted⁸ (with non-Aboriginal women offenders, *Not letting the time do you* (1998) by Dr. Donna McDonagh and with Aboriginal women offenders, *Whatever Happened to the Promises of Creating Choices?* (1999) by Sky Blue Morin).

From "healing house" to the Intensive Intervention Strategy

Both the Whitehall and Rivera reports recommended a "healing house" concept. As a result of the work of the inter-disciplinary teams at the RPC and at PFW, it became evident that some women at the maximum security level, with additional support for daily living or mental health needs, could function at lower security levels; ExCom approved the development of the "healing house" concept. Dr. Alan Warner, an external expert in community-living environments for persons with mental health needs was contracted to develop the framework. His report, *Implementing Choices at Regional Facilities: Program Proposals for Women Offenders with Special Needs* (March 1998), recommended that two treatment programs (Dialectical Behaviour Therapy and Psychosocial Rehabilitation) be introduced to enable some women to remain in the regional institutions but with enhanced support.⁹ In May ExCom approved implementation of the Structured Living Environment (SLE) approach at each institution as outlined by Dr. Warner. Principles were established for staffing, program model, staff training, budget and design.

In April 1998, a *Creativity Focus Group on Options for Maximum Security Women* was held with external stakeholders. Their options were presented to the Commissioner in May: intensive staff training, program options, continued research and a unit at each institution. Excom approved the option to construct the maximum security units (Secure Units) on the grounds of regional women's institutions; either one at each institution or an east-west option. In June 1998, ExCom recommended renovating the existing Enhanced Units. Part of this approach was to keep the numbers low because "if you build it, they will come."

Several ExCom discussions resulted in linking the SLE and the Secure Unit concepts into a comprehensive *Intensive Intervention Strategy* (IIS). Resource standards, conceptual designs and operational principles were developed and the Deputy Commissioner for Women presented the IIS to ExCom in November 1998. It received a mixed reception. There were concerns about the operational impact of having maximum security women housed near women classified at lower security levels. Regional and national representatives met to see if consensus could be reached, however, at that time, hesitation still reigned and a couple of regions expressed reservations about the maximum security plans.

In February 1999, ExCom agreed to renovate and expand the Enhanced Units (creating Secure Units); however, as many issues remained unresolved, ExCom agreed to deal with these issues through implementation. The Intensive Intervention Strategy submission, with distinct resource plans for the Structured Living Environment and Secure Units, was sent to Treasury Board in March. It was approved in May and planning continued through the summer. On September 3, 1999, the Intensive Intervention Strategy was formally announced by Solicitor General Lawrence McAulay.

The Structured Living Environment houses accommodate women at the minimum and medium security level with mental health problems who require additional support and intervention. The house is staffed 24 hours a day with dedicated staff who have received specialised mental health training and who work as an inter-disciplinary team. The Secure Units are of a more traditional construction (2 or 3 pods of 5-6 cells each, staff and program space), but they, too, have a dedicated roster who have received specialised mental health training and who work as an inter-disciplinary team.

Co-Located Units

During the period of 1999 to 2001, while CSC focused on the development of the IIS¹⁰, a series of very serious incidents (including hostage-taking of both staff and inmates) occurred at both the RPC and Saskatchewan Penitentiary units. These events prompted Commissioner Lucie McClung to recommend that elements of the IIS be implemented in the co-located units as soon as possible. Additional non-security staff were hired, mental health training was provided and increased regional and national support was made available, resulting in a reduction of incidents.

Conclusion

In May, 2000, the last inmates from PFW were transferred to Grand Valley Institution for Women and on July 6, 2000, PFW was officially closed. In August 2001, the first SLE opened at Nova and by December 2001, all SLE houses were operational. In January 2003, the Secure Unit opened in Nova, followed by the Edmonton Institution for Women in February, Joliette in May and finally, Grand Valley in October 2004. The women's unit at Saskatchewan Penitentiary closed in March 2003, followed by the Springhill Institution unit in June 2003 and the Regional Reception Centre unit in the fall of 2004.

After years of partnership with the province of British Columbia, federal women inmates were

returned to federal jurisdiction in March 2004 with the opening of Fraser Valley Institution in Abbotsford (main institution and SLE). The Secure Unit is under construction and is expected to open in the fall of 2005.

At the time this article was written, there were about 39 women classified at the maximum security level. This is about 10% of the incarcerated population. Since the fall of 1997, the maximum security population has fluctuated between 9% and 12% of the incarcerated population. Several women who had been incarcerated in the co-located units managed to attain their medium security status after 6-9 months under the Intensive Intervention Strategy.

The innovative path of *Creating Choices* has taken CSC to a place it has never been. Many assumptions were implemented, proved correct and are supported to this day. Others proved erroneous and CSC had to take a different path. The biggest challenge has been that of the women classified at the maximum security level. The Intensive Intervention Strategy, though still in its infancy, appears to be an effective approach. ■

¹ 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, ON K1A 0P9

² Available on the CSC web site, www.csc-ccc.gc.ca/text/publicsubject_e.shtml/#women

³ The Executive Committee ("ExCom") is the executive management committee of CSC. Members include the Regional Deputy Commissioners, NHQ Sector Heads, the Deputy Commissioner for Women and the Senior Deputy Commissioner. The Commissioner chairs the Committee.

⁴ *Brainstorming Session-Understanding Violence by Women and Dealing with Women's Anger*, July 5-7, 1995, CSC 1995.

⁵ *Giving Us a Chance: Needs Assessment: Mental Health Resources for Federally Sentenced Women in the Regional Facilities*, Margo Rivera, M.Ed., Ph.D. March 31, 1996.

⁶ *Mental Health Profile and Intervention Strategy for Atlantic Region Federally Sentenced Women*, G.C. Whitehall, October 1995

⁷ The maximum and medium security women at EIFW were transferred to Alberta provincial facilities under an Exchange of Service Agreement and remained there until late August 1996.

⁸ For example, as indicated, in both the McDonagh and Morin reports, maximum security women continually cited positive and consistent staff communication, interaction and reinforcement as factors to help them to focus on reducing their security level, as well as a Correctional Plan that was appropriate and realistic. In general, the personal factors that helped women reduce security levels were self-respect, self discipline and greater self-awareness.

⁹ Dr. Warner initially reviewed cases at Nova and GVIW but later reviewed the situation at EIFW and Joliette. Because of changing population profiles CSC has moved away from only one type of intervention at a specific facility and offer both DBT and PSR in all regional institutions.

¹⁰ From 1999 on, staff from national headquarters led working groups of regional and institutional staff to develop and implement specialized program models, staffing plans, specialized staff training and two Operational Plans, for the SLE and Secure Units.

The reintegration of federally-sentenced women: A commentary

Kristi Squires¹

Women Offender Sector, Correctional Service of Canada

On April 8, 2003, the Auditor General report on the reintegration of federal women offenders was tabled in the House of Commons. The audit was comprehensive, and covered all aspects of the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC's) reintegration activities for women offenders.

The report commenced by acknowledging the gains CSC has made in the area of corrections for women over the past 13 years, including the construction of four new regional facilities and an aboriginal healing lodge, the closure of Prison for Women and the development of women-centred rehabilitation programs. Progress notwithstanding, the Auditor General noted that further challenges remain and that additional advancement is necessary.

The report examines and makes recommendations on issues such as classification, case management, program delivery, release mechanisms, employment training, accommodation, and community programs and services. At the time of the report's tabling, CSC concurred with each of its recommendations, and committed to take necessary action to address them.

The following article provides a brief overview of the report's main recommendations and outlines action that CSC has initiated, or is initiating, to respond to them.

Classification instruments

The Auditor General expressed concerns regarding CSC's classification measures for women offenders. In light of a more recent recommendation made by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, CSC will be working with experts to develop a gender-specific initial security classification scale for women. Until this instrument is fully implemented, the Custody Rating Scale will continue to be used as a guide for decision making regarding initial security level. Although not specifically developed for women inmates, the Custody Rating Scale has been validated by CSC for this group.

Given the impact that reclassification decisions have on an offender's rehabilitation, the Auditor General recommended that the Service increase its efforts to implement the newly developed reclassification tool for women offenders.² Field test validation of this scale is now complete and data has been analyzed. It is anticipated the scale will be implemented in 2005.

Case management

In her report, the Auditor General raised concerns about delays in completing correctional plans. It was recommended that CSC determine the underlying causes for such, and endeavour to complete these plans in a timely manner. The Service acknowledges that timely completion of correctional plans is imperative, and has committed to monitoring correctional plan completion rates on a monthly basis. For the period commencing April 1, 2003 and ending September 30, 2003, 95.1% of all correctional plans were completed in a timely manner. This represents an increase of 27.8% for the same period in 2002.

In an effort to better prepare women offenders for parole at the earliest possible date, the Auditor General recommended that CSC review how it delivers programs to women offenders. In response to this recommendation, the Service adjusted two of its primary programs for women offenders (the Women Offender Substance Abuse Program and the Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Program) to allow for open entry participation. Other programs have been adjusted to allow for small group and/or one-to-one intervention. Program schedules have also been adjusted to ensure programs are delivered at the earliest possible date. These changes are resulting in a reduction of the time offenders spend waiting to enrol in programs, and are better preparing women offenders to be released on parole earlier in their sentences.

Substance abuse programming

The Auditor General recommended that CSC implement its proposed gender-specific substance abuse program for women offenders without delay. Since release of the report, the Women Offender Substance Abuse Program³ has been implemented in each of CSC's regional facilities. This program empowers women to make healthy lifestyle choices through the experience of a comprehensive, integrated, and gender responsive program for recovery. A Relapse Prevention/Maintenance Module has also been implemented, on a pilot basis, in eleven communities across the country.

Release mechanisms

It was recommended that CSC increase its use of temporary absences, work releases, and Section 81 and 84 arrangements. CSC has since examined issues that have hindered use of temporary absences and work releases, and is working to increase their application on a case-by-case basis. The Service is also engaged in discussions with a number of Aboriginal communities to raise interest in participating in the correctional process, and to initiate Section 84 arrangements. Ten Aboriginal Community Development Officer positions have been staffed across the country to assist in this regard. CSC will continue to work actively with Aboriginal communities to initiate culturally appropriate release arrangements for Aboriginal women.

Employment Training

To better prepare women offenders for future employment, the Auditor General recommended that CSC develop and implement a Women's Employment Strategy that includes certification of marketable skills. To respond to this recommendation, the Service launched a survey with incarcerated women and women on conditional release to obtain an enhanced understanding of their work experience, training and skills before and during their incarceration, as well as their perceived employment competencies and suggested strategies for overcoming impediments to obtaining and maintaining meaningful work in the community. Data collection and analysis will be complete in the fall of 2004. Results of the survey will serve as the basis for the development of a national employment strategy for women offenders.

An Employment and Employability Program is also being implemented at each of CSC's women's facilities. This program is designed to enhance the employability of offenders through institutional work experience. Between April 1, 2003 and February 22, 2004, a total of 437 women held a full or part-time institutional work assignment. This represents a 10% increase over the previous year.

Accommodation

The Auditor General recommended that CSC develop an action plan to meet alternative accommodation needs of women offenders in the community. The Service concurred with the recommendation and agreed to seek alternatives

such as private home placements and satellite apartment initiatives in areas where larger facilities are not practical. While there is currently sufficient bed space to meet the residential accommodation needs of women in the community, CSC continues to work with its partners to expand and strengthen these and other residential options for women on release in the community⁴. CSC has since increased its residential accommodation capacity for women offenders by 37 beds. This represents a 15% increase over the previous year.

Action plans have been developed in each region to assist in meeting future alternative accommodation targets. CSC is also working with its partners and stakeholders to raise the community's understanding of, and support for, residential accommodation options.

Community programs and services

The Auditor General recommended that CSC examine factors that contribute to the high number of women whose conditional release is revoked without offence. Analysis reveals that the highest proportion of revocations are statutory release or accelerated parole release cases. With implementation of the Women Offender Substance Abuse Program and the Structured Living Environment houses (which address the needs of women with mental health problems), CSC is working to ensure that women receive the help they require prior to release. It is hoped that these programs will contribute to the reduction of overall revocations, though it will likely take a couple of years for them to impact upon reconviction rates. Implementation of the Substance Abuse Maintenance/Relapse Prevention Program in the community is helping to ensure that women are acquiring the support they need while on conditional release.

The Correctional Service of Canada welcomes the feedback it receives from the Auditor General of Canada, as recommendations included in such audit reports help to improve the efficiency and performance of our programs and services for women offenders. ■

¹ 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, ON K1A 0P9

² See Blanchette & Taylor in this issue of FORUM.

³ See Hume in this issue of FORUM.

⁴ See Loiselle in this issue of FORUM.

Structured living environments in Canadian federal institutions for women

Roma Cunningham¹
Correctional Service of Canada

It was Monday afternoon. Hummingbird staff were in the middle of the Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) individual program reviews. Ruthie was up next. She came in smiling at everyone and sat down. She began talking about how excited she was about her upcoming parole hearing. As we watched her we were taken back to the days when we dreaded her reviews and had to sit in the dark to even get her to come through the door.

Behaviour change is the business of Hummingbird House at the Edmonton Institution For Women (EIFW). This Structured Living Environment (SLE) was so named because in coastal Native culture, the hummingbird is synonymous with healing. Hummingbird House fulfilled the gap in services for a few women offenders with significant mental health and emotional dysregulation issues. All SLEs in the federal women's facilities across Canada are very similar. They are stand alone structures that house a maximum of eight minimum and/or medium security women. In comparison to the rest of the housing units the SLE is resource rich. Part time psychological services and staff clinical supervision are provided by the Chief of Psychology. Three dedicated Behaviour Counselors facilitate the Dialectical Behaviour Therapy group and work individually with the women, while specially selected Primary Workers co-facilitate the group and provide security. The psychiatric nurse supports the team and provides information from a medical perspective. The Team Leader fulfills the administrative role but also plays a very "hands on" role in the daily operations of the unit. Prior to the opening of the unit all staff received general mental health, DBT and Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR) training from National Headquarters.

Hummingbird House opened its doors in December, 2001 to six women who had been specifically selected by the Coordinated Care Committee from staff referrals. Since that time Hummingbird House has been home to 39 different women. Some women come for a short time while they work on specific problematic behaviours, while others are long-term residents who really want to make significant lifestyle changes and can tolerate the 24 hour staff scrutiny. The primary therapy model is DBT². This is a cognitive-behavioural therapy approach specifically adapted to target not just borderline personality

features, but anti-social personality traits as well. The DBT skills group is held each weekday morning while the remainder of the day and weekends allow the women the opportunity to practice their new skills in a relatively safe environment. Any specific problems that a woman may be encountering can be dealt with by her individual counsellor in the weekly one-on-one session.

Marie moves to Hummingbird House because she was having significant trouble getting along in a regular housing unit. When she arrived she was very sullen and didn't appear to like staff. While she attended the group she did not like to be called on to participate. However, her homework assignments and questions to staff outside the group indicated that she was attentive and learning. She was a challenge. She was so fearful of social settings that she found it terrifying to participate in her own DBT program review conferences. The lights were turned out so she could talk. She has come so far that she was recently granted day parole to a treatment facility and she is really excited about going. She still has bad days but now when staff ask her what skill would be useful to get her through the stressful situation, she is able to identify and practice this new behaviour, thereby de-escalating herself. She is very proud of her newfound ability. So are staff.

A snapshot from a woman living in Hummingbird House

During my 18 months at EIFW, I spent nine months living in a minimum house in general population and nine months living in the SLE unit. Each was a very different experience. During that time, I have been through the DBT program twice. I much preferred living in the SLE unit. I have found it to be a much more supportive environment. You develop a more involved relationship with the staff that work on the unit. When you need help or just someone to talk to, the staff is always available. I developed a trust with certain staff members, which I believe was essential to my progress. There is a comfort in knowing that you can talk about anything, without having to explain your whole life story first, because you've built that relationship with them. DBT has helped me become more aware of my own thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This is something that was

difficult for me. I spent most of my life denying my own self and trying to be what others told me I was. I am more aware of my ingrained reactions to certain situations, thoughts and feelings. I am more able to recognize when the reaction starts and I can step back from it and generally stop it or at least work my way through it, instead of letting it control me.

I have come to realize that I have strength, determination, resiliency, understanding and a desire to make a better life for myself. All of these things have come from my past experiences. Those experiences have given me the wisdom to recognize my need to change and DBT has given me some of the skills to help me make those changes. I leave here a different person than when I first came through the

gate. I am confident that I can face each day and deal with whatever life sends my way. The hard work and trying times were worth every minute of my time here. Sometimes life sends us experiences that we neither want nor ask for. But in the end, it is those very experiences that can dramatically effect the rest of our lives and can potentially lead us in a new and better direction. (DeaLynn Davies, March 21, 2004). ■

¹ 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, ON K1A 0P9

² Linehan, M. (1993). *Cognitive Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

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Fraser Valley Institution: A new federal corrections facility for women

Dianne Brown¹

Commissioning Warden, Correctional Service of Canada

In January 2002, the government of British Columbia announced that it would be closing Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women (BCCW) by 31 March 2004. At that time there were approximately 40 women serving sentences of two years or more living at BCCW. These women were managed under an Exchange of Service Agreement between Correctional Services Canada (CSC) and B.C. Provincial Corrections. This meant that they were afforded all of the programs and services available to women serving federal sentences in federally operated institutions in other regions of Canada. However, they were co-located with women serving provincial sentences, on remand or under immigration hold orders.

When the imminent closure of BCCW was announced, CSC assessed the number of options including the return of jurisdiction to CSC for women serving sentences of two years or more. In September 2002, the Solicitor General announced that these women would be returned to CSC's jurisdiction and housed on the site of the former Sumas Community Correctional Centre in Abbotsford, B.C.

Background

I had the honour of being appointed Commissioning Warden for the newest institution in the Pacific Region. We did not have a name, we did not have any inmates, and we did not have staff. We had only eighteen months to open. The success of this project required cooperation and the efforts of National Headquarters (NHQ), Regional Headquarters (RHQ), Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), the commissioning team, federal women at Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women (BCCW), BC Corrections Officials, Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) staff, Community Corrections, partner agencies and community members. The new institution will be located on the Matsqui Complex in Abbotsford, British Columbia, and will join the existing structures of Matsqui Institution — medium security, Regional Treatment Centre/Pacific Institution — multi-level facility, Community Corrections Administration offices for the region and the Regional Supply Depot.

Guiding Principles

The Operational Plan for the institution is grounded in the principles established in *Creating Choices*: Empowerment; Responsible and Meaningful Choices; Respect and Dignity; Shared Responsibility and a Supportive Environment. These principles guided the commissioning team in all of its endeavours including design of the physical structures, staffing, operational policies, transition planning with the women at BCCW, development of community partners and communicating with various publics.

In June 2003 the facility was named Fraser Valley Institution (FVI). The institution is being constructed in two phases. Initially FVI will house approximately 50 minimum and medium classified women. The minimum and medium units will include residential style housing each accommodating six women. As in other regional women's facilities, these houses do not have a continuous staff presence. In addition, a Structured Living Environment (SLE) that will accommodate 8 minimum and/or medium security women with mental health needs that require more intensive support. A multi-disciplinary team of professionals will operate this house, including a Team Leader, Psychiatric Nurse, Psychologist, Behavioral Counselors, and Primary Workers. There will be 24 hour staff presence in this house.

Physical Plan — Phase I and Phase II

During the first phase there will be many temporary working areas including Case Management, Institutional Services, Maintenance, Spirituality, Visits and Correspondence, Admissions and Discharge and Food Services. The Principal Entrance, Secure Central Control (SCC) and Segregation are temporary structures. The completion of Phase Two (scheduled for mid 2005), will include a Secure Unit with capacity for 10 maximum security and four segregation cells, a recreation centre, principal entrance, SCC, Visits, Administration area, Institutional Services, CORCAN, Food Services.

Maintenance — Admissions and Discharge

During the construction of the Secure Unit, women classified as maximum security will be housed in one of the secure units at another federal Women's facility, or they may apply to remain with British

Columbia Corrections. They will remain in secure custody pending the completion of the Secure Unit or until there is a reduction in their security classification.

Transition from Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women Staff

The opening of FVI will involve significant transition for both incarcerated women and those women under community supervision. Several programs have been offered to the women while at BCCW to assist them with the transition to Fraser Valley Institution. In January 2004, the women became actively involved in the development of a landscape plan for Fraser Valley Institution. Once they arrive on site they will implement the plan in stages, including creating child friendly areas, Aboriginal gardens, and developing healthy outdoor living spaces. This undertaking will be made possible through partnership with a non-profit organization (Evergreen) involved with bringing communities and nature together for the benefit of both.

Programs

Similar to the existing regional facilities, FVI will offer Correctional Programming that has been developed specifically to address women's needs and is delivered using a woman centered approach. Programs include substance abuse, survivors of trauma and abuse,

reasoning and rehabilitation, education and continuous learning, and employment skills development.

Staff

When the institution is fully operational there will be a staff complement of approximately 110. FVI will have a diverse, enthusiastic, professional and well-trained work force. All staff working at the institution will participate in Women Centred Training and the majority has completed non-violent crisis intervention, mental health and suicide awareness training.

Transfers of the women from BCCW to Fraser Valley Institution began during the month of March 2004. The challenges of opening a new facility are many. However, the team has worked together to create the best possible environment for the women, staff and visitors to Fraser Valley Institution.

It is our responsibility to Canadians to prepare the women for safe return to their communities and to contribute to the safety of communities during the incarceral as well as the community supervision phase of the women's sentence. At Fraser Valley Institution, the staff is committed to CSC's Mission and serving the Canadian public to the best of our ability. ■

¹ 33344 King Road, Abbotsford, BC V2S 6J5

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Implementation of a supervision project for federally-sentenced women in Montreal

Ruth Gagnon¹

Elizabeth Fry Society of Quebec

In the winter of 2001, Denis Méthé, Director of the Montreal Metropolitan district, authorized the creation of a team of women parole officers whose mandate is to supervise only federally sentenced women on conditional release in the Montreal area and Longueuil. That decision has enabled the team to develop supervision expertise in terms of approach, philosophy and casework strategies, and to acquire a better knowledge of the community resources that can provide these women with assistance and support services that are essential to their reintegration.

A similar experiment in Toronto

In Toronto, there has been a unit of 5 female parole officers supervising only women parolees since 1997. According to clinical assistant Susan Cummings, setting up that specialized unit has proven to be particularly effective in meeting these women's sometimes complex needs during the reintegration process. Ongoing on-the-job training, an effective working team, and good communication strategies with the client group are key elements in the unit's approach to women parolees.

The Montreal team

The Montreal supervision team comprises three female parole officers, including one officer with over 10 years experience supervising women parolees in the community as liaison officer at Maison Thérèse-Casgrain. Through her work supervising female residents at this halfway house, Carole Lemieux quickly realized that women parolees experience psychosocial problems to varying degrees: sexual and physical abuse, lack of affection, alcohol and drug addiction, mental health problems, lack of education, and little significant work experience are among the problems most often encountered in her practice as a parole officer at Maison Thérèse-Casgrain.

Aware of these women's needs and of the need to develop an innovative correctional approach geared to the reality of their lives, Carole Lemieux persuaded her management to implement a supervision project exclusively for women parolees in Montreal and the surrounding area. In 2001, Johanne Perreault, an experienced parole officer who also has expertise in managing community

programs administered by the Correctional Service of Canada, joined Carole Lemieux. With the arrival in 2002 of Renée Bray and the energy and experience she brings with her, the team is now complete.

Objectives of the team

These women parole officers state that bringing female parolees together in the same supervision unit has a number of advantages, from both an administrative and a casework point of view.

According to Carole Lemieux, that administrative decision has allowed the female officers supervising these offenders to develop greater expertise in assessing the needs of this client group; to introduce casework strategies that are suited to these women's lives, to develop alternatives to incarceration in a context that is safe and reassuring for the community, and to ensure continuity from a casework standpoint since this centralized supervision allows the same officer to retain individual clients throughout their parole. Such continuity is impossible for men, since men on parole are usually supervised by the parole office that covers the area in which they live. As a result, a change of address also means a change of supervisor.

As well, it is easier for team members to exchange ideas and share expertise, to support one another and to promote self-help since they work from the same office. This form of specialization leads to greater cohesiveness in the supervision approach. While retaining their own personalities, the officers work within an administrative framework that is more conducive to sharing their strengths and offsetting individual shortcomings. In short, this arrangement reduces the negative effects of professional isolation and burnout.

Community response

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Québec welcomes this initiative by Denis Méthé of the Correctional Service of Canada's Montreal Metropolitan District and wishes to take this opportunity to salute the pioneering work of Carole Lemieux. In our opinion, that administrative decision has already had a positive impact on the supervision of women parolees, in terms of continuity of approach and

innovative strategies for dealing with this type of offender. The team works closely with the Société's resources and is able, for example, to use Maison Thérèse-Casgrain as an alternative to incarceration when a crisis can be contained in a setting that provides guidance and support but not security measures such as those found in a penitentiary.

As well, since we work with these parole officers nearly every day, we can share our expertise regarding community resources with them, thus benefiting their client parolees.

In sum, this structure is conducive to stronger ties between Joliette Institution and the community and to the development of partnership strategies with all stakeholders working with federally sentenced women. The supervision of women parolees in Montreal is an effective correctional program because it is in keeping to the reality of this client group. It deserves to be recognized and commended. ■

¹ The Elizabeth Fry Society of Québec, 5105 Chemin De la Côte St. Antoine, Montreal, QC H4A 1N8

Source: Montreal Metropolitan District project on the team supervising women parolees, presented by Carole Lemieux

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An exceptional resource for women in the Outaouais: The Josée McCann Centre

Marie-France Loiseau¹

Hull Area Parole Office, Correctional Service of Canada

Introduction

Where women offenders are concerned, the 1990s were rich in developments in the field of corrections. Once the new institutions for federally sentenced women had been designed and constructed, there was a need to rethink the community strategy to ensure follow-up in the services provided for women offenders. One of the main challenges encountered in developing this strategy was the fact that women living outside of the major urban centres were scattered in a variety of different locations. As well, the fact that there were few referral resources in these regions made it difficult to develop structured resources for this client group.

In Quebec, during this period of reflection the Elizabeth Fry Society (EFS) worked especially hard to develop regionalized services for both provincial and federal client groups. Its challenge was to set up a model for the delivery of flexible, affordable services that met the expectations of the various correctional groups.

In the Outaouais, Josée McCann showed an interest in developing the EFS concept, in the form of a reintegration centre providing accommodation in a group home type of setting as well as external support and supervision services for women offenders.

With the support of the Quebec provincial as well as the federal correctional services, this initiative by the Elizabeth Fry Society became a reality five years ago. This initiative, which has become a model for the delivery of such services, has proven its value and has demonstrated that providing high-quality services for women offenders is possible even in regions outside urban centres. This concept is now considered a success, and this success has a name: The Josée McCann Centre.

Objectives

The centre's objectives are:

- to promote reintegration by providing basic accommodation and services geared to this client group;
- to be a resource for intake and specific services for women dealing with the criminal justice system in the Outaouais;

- to offer an alternative to incarceration through accommodation or through services and supervision;
- to offer services that complement those provided by correctional services;
- to keep as many women offenders as possible in their home region;
- to provide liaison between correctional and community services; and
- to prevent reoffending by ensuring that members of this client group take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Resources of the centre

The Josée McCann Centre offers temporary accommodation, supervision for provincially sentenced women offenders, as well as program and consultation services. In addition, the centre offers referral and accompaniment services to other community resources in the region. Since 1999, 206 women have used these services. The average duration of use of external services is 150 days.

With extensive knowledge of all existing resources in the region that relate to the issues facing this client group, the centre offers provides services using a psychosocial approach focused on ensuring that clients take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Since she is the only worker, Josée McCann regularly accepts volunteers, as well as trainees from the various universities in the region, for whom she provides clinical supervision.

Accommodation at the centre

The centre is a specialized type of resource similar to a group home. The services it provides include accommodation, basic meals and constant supervision when the women are at the house.

Since 1999, 59 women have resided at the centre. The average length of use for accommodation has been 35 days. The success rate, as measured by the number of offenders who follow through on a reintegration plan (which entails seeking employment, finding accommodation, going back to school and arranging child care) without reoffending, is 90%

during the period in which clients are being supervised by the centre.

The centre's experience demonstrates that this type of approach is effective in meeting the needs of women offenders. The special features of this resource are as follows:

- creation of meaningful connections with the women offenders, given the limited number of beds available;
- knowledge of the characteristics of women offenders obtained as a result of the co-ordinator's training, which is not present in an ordinary group home;
- development of social skills (active participation in daily activities such as organizing and preparing meals, keeping house, drawing up and following a budget, shopping for groceries and planning menus);
- development of healthy life habits (three healthy, balanced meals a day; balance among work, sleep and recreation);
- workshops in art therapy (making clothing and creating decorations, for example).

This shared intimacy between worker and client is a noteworthy element of the clinical approach being applied here. While remaining highly professional in her relationships, Josée has agreed to live in unusually close quarters with the women and to be available to them around the clock. This approach demands considerable personal adjustment.

As well, Josée is assisted by a number of trainees and a support service that gives her a few hours of respite each week. Josée must routinely co-ordinate the follow-up she provides for women being supervised externally with the responsibility she assumes for the women residing at her home.

External services provided through the centre

The centre helps women offenders with needs in the following areas: isolation, spousal violence, addiction, suicidal tendencies, physical and mental health problems, unhealthy lifestyles, codependence, parenting skills, poverty, lack of life skills, problems with Quebec's Direction de la Jeunesse, or lack of information about their rights and the resources available to assist them.

The support services the centre offers thus relate to labour market re-entry, finding accommodation, mental health, and violence prevention. Other services are available to clients who have problems

with shoplifting, codependence, difficult intimate relationships, low self-esteem or limited social skills. In some cases, the centre offers assistance using the systemic approach for families in difficulty.

The centre is also open as a day centre during the week. Women clients can have the benefit of active listening, obtain assistance and ideas about various issues, and consult a directory of resources.

Because the centre is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, women clients receiving community supervision can reach the centre at any time. This aspect of availability, which meets a growing need expressed by women clients and increases the use made of this resource, deserves recognition.

Community supervision

Josée McCann is recognized as a probation officer by the Quebec provincial correctional service. This means that she is responsible for the direct supervision of an average of 14 women each month, and for the supervisory activities this client group requires.

Stop-Shoplifting Program

During the year, Josée regularly leads an intervention program for women charged with shoplifting and other economic crimes, such as credit card fraud. The objectives of this group program are to provide a sentencing alternative, to reduce reoffending, and to ensure that these women offenders take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Court and detention centre accompaniment service

Wishing to continue to provide the well-known assistance services of the Elizabeth Fry Society, Josée offers a variety of services to women who must appear in court and women serving Quebec provincial sentences: intake, information about the legal system, escort, comfort, listening and support.

Service agreement with the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC)

Only a few months after the centre opened in 1999, the Hull area (Quebec) drew up a service agreement so that it could be a partner in this initiative. Josée McCann's centre was recognized under the federal "private home" standards, and can therefore receive federally sentenced women who have been placed voluntarily while on Unescorted Temporary Absence, Full Parole, or Statutory Release.

The other aspect emphasized by the CSC was the development in March 2000 of an exchange of services covering direct support services for women. As a result, we have a service agreement with the centre for an accompaniment service that will promote reintegration of women offenders experiencing difficulties in their social, occupational, cultural or family lives. Under the agreement, women offenders have access to the full range of services the centre provides. Lastly, Josée McCann is also an ideal resource person for parole officers when the time comes to evaluate and put into effect release strategies for federally sentenced women.

Conclusion

In many parts of Canada, developing a community strategy for women offenders in regions outside major urban centres remains a challenge. We wanted

to introduce this resource to you in order to demonstrate the contribution that one woman can make to a regional community by becoming involved, providing humanitarian and professional standards that support this vital and necessary service.

The model used, although its structure is quite simple, calls for vision and a profound conviction that human beings are capable of change. Through her approach and the flexibility of the services she offers, Josée McCann is successfully meeting a full range of needs among this particular group of clients, thus making a commendable contribution to protecting society. ■

¹ 15 Boulevard Gamelin, Suite 102, Gatineau, QC J8Y 1V4

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Federally sentenced women in the community: Dynamic risk predictors

Moira A. Law¹

Centre for Criminal Justice Studies, University of New Brunswick, Saint John

Prediction research with female offenders has increased substantially over the past 25 years. Presently, the "cutting edge" of prediction research has been the analysis of the dynamic risk predictor². The dynamic risk predictor, e.g., substance abuse problem, differs from the traditional static risk predictor, e.g., age at first arrest, as it exclusively explores malleable "needs" that if attended to will decrease the chance of future criminal conduct³. Researchers examine the change in repeated measures of predictor variables as they relate to outcomes such as community adjustment. These dynamic risk predictors serve not only as indicators for future community adjustment but simultaneously provide tangible targets/goals for effective treatment services.

Currently there are several criminogenic needs that have demonstrated consistent predictive validity with male offenders: criminal attitudes, criminal associates, educational issues, employment, substance abuse, family/marital relations, associates/social support, living arrangements and personal/emotional orientations.⁴ Currently, there is considerable support that many of these dynamic risk predictors may be pertinent for the female population.⁵ However there is debate regarding which needs are paramount⁶ and whether they are as important for females as they are for males.⁷

The Study

The present study focused on the change in criminogenic needs for 497 federally sentenced women in the community and their relationship to future adjustment. The seven criminogenic need domains from the Community Intervention Scale — associates, attitudes, community functioning, employment, marital/family, personal/emotional, and substance abuse — served as the dynamic risk predictors for this investigation. Measures of community adjustment were coded from Canadian Police Information Center (CPIC) files providing official recidivism data. Non-violent reconvictions were defined as a conviction for any new general offence, e.g., theft, or fraud. Violent reconvictions were defined as any new conviction for an offence involving crimes against persons, e.g., assault and robbery.

The Women

The average age of the sample at the time of the study was 36.8 years ($n = 497$, $SD = 8.7$) with a range of 20.6 to 68.9 years. Well over half the sample (61%) were single/separated/divorced while 33% were living common-law or were married ($n = 497$). The sample ($n = 497$) was predominantly Caucasian (57%), with 19% Aboriginal, and the remaining 8% belonging to other minority groups. The majority of women had been convicted for property offences such as theft (60.6%) and fraud (39.8%), followed by drug convictions (46.7%). The most common violent convictions were for weapons 30.6%, arson 20.7% and kidnapping 13.9%; with only the proverbial handful of women in this sample having ever been convicted for assaults (4.8%) or murder (3%).

The Results

The average time of follow-up of the women in the community was 29 months ($SD = 16.6$) and ranged from 5 days to 6 years. Not surprisingly, the majority of reconvicted offenders were non-violent offenders (85.1%). This sample generally engaged in relatively little violent post-release behaviour (<5%). Crimes such as theft (45.3%) failing to appear (29.5%) and fraud (20%) dominated the convictions. Assault was the most common offence (43%) of all violent crimes committed, followed by weapons (21%) and robbery (21%). Only one woman in this sample was convicted of manslaughter while on conditional release.

Timing of Failures

The women were assessed at each of the following 4 time periods: At 0 to 6 months (time 1), at 6 to 12 months (time 2), at 12 to 18 months (time 3), and at 18 months to 2 years (time 4). Although there were women who recidivated during all four time periods, the majority of offenders returned to incarceration during their first 6 months in the community. In a somewhat predictable manner, 67 of the 103 failures (65%) occurred before their second assessment (time 2).

Dynamic Measures

The mean and standard deviations for the seven dynamic measures from the Community International Scale showed all seven variables

decreasing in the severity of their need levels across time. Authentic dynamic change in the variables was supported in the analysis, as all need domains exhibited significant amounts of change at time 1 through to time 4, except the substance abuse variable. There were significant changes in each dynamic variable at each assessment wave. With the dynamic nature of the variables established, the analysis turned to predicting two outcome measures, i.e., general failure and violent re-offences.

Correlations

The first set of correlational analyses demonstrated that the initial assessment of four variables (at time 1) were valuable predictors of the female offenders' adjustment in the community; the associates variable, antisocial attitudes, family factors and substance abuse.

Re-assessments

The next set of analyses assessed how well the *re-assessment* of the dynamic measures could enhance predictive accuracy, using the assessment immediately prior to an offender's failure. There was a marked increase in the predictive accuracy attained by all seven dynamic measures relating to the specified outcomes. Variables, which had little predictive accuracy at the time of their first assessment, now exhibited significant relationships with several of the outcome measures. Employment, substance abuse, community functioning and personal/emotional needs, which had yielded no previous association, now displayed significant predictive prowess. And those variables that were moderate predictors at the time of the first assessment showed even stronger predictive accuracy, e.g., family and associates. Interestingly, attitudes showed the opposite trend; with stronger predictive validity at the time of their first assessment compared to those measurements at the time of the last assessment before failure. Not surprisingly, the prediction of violent offences remained limited. What was unanticipated was that substance abuse (which previously presented a weak relationship to failure in prior correlational analysis) was one of only two variables that predicted violent re-offending. The other predictive criminogenic need for violent behaviour was the offender's associates.

Survival Time

The relationship between the need variables and the amount of time they survived out in the community before re-offending was then examined. Five of the seven variables ($n=497$) significantly predicted time to failure (revocation or recidivism) ($p<.05$), to the exclusion of the personal/emotional and community functioning variables.

Best Prediction Model at Time 1

The next phase of the analyses assessed which combination of dynamic risk predictors assessed at time 1 made the strongest predictor model? Only associates and attitudes entered the equation, as employment, family and substance abuse factors did not add significantly to the predictive power of the set. For violent reconvictions the associates variable remained a moderate predictor ($p<.01$) of time to failure, followed by significant but weaker relationships of family, substance abuse and attitude variables ($p<.01$).

Dynamic Measures

The final set of analyses attempted to unearth the best *dynamic* risk predictors, those that improve in their predictive ability over time. Strong positive relationships were unearthed between all seven variables and the amount of time the offender spent in the community.

The last analysis in this study attempted to select the best combination of time dependent dynamic variables using Cox Stepwise Regression Survival Analysis. All seven variables were entered as they all demonstrated a significant univariate relationship with survival time in the previous analysis. Only associates and employment entered the model, as the other five variables did not add significantly to the predictive power of the set. When violent reconvictions were examined as the outcome measure the associates variable remained a strong ($p<.001$) predictor of survival time, with substance abuse and personal emotional factors also displaying significant relationships with the outcome.

Conclusions

Overall, the results were positive as six of the seven domains, excluding substance abuse, demonstrated genuine change throughout the study period, and all seven variables were significantly related to outcome measures. The employment and associates variables were empirically deemed the strongest predictors of failure, while the remaining variables displayed moderate to weak predictive relationships with recidivism. Despite the suggestion that risk assessment instruments developed primarily for male offenders may not be applicable for female offenders⁸ the results of this study demonstrate the CIS to be a relevant and valuable tool for the assessment of female offenders in the community. All seven variables were predictive of future behaviour. Four of these variables were capable of significantly anticipating violent behaviour. Ultimately, this study directly addressed the "debatable" issue whether and which dynamic risk

predictors are relevant for the female offender and addressed the contentious issue that the "genesis of" and "interventions for" female criminality is *completely* different from their male counterparts. Obviously, this study does not exclude the empirically validated contribution that other variables may eventually contribute to the understanding of female criminality. However, it does provide pragmatic

power to the notion that there are dynamic risk predictors for community adjustment that are relevant for both men and women. Echoing Brown's⁹ sentiments, "priority should be given to securing employment and maintaining steady employment as well as building (healthy) support networks" for offenders as they re-enter the community. ■

- ¹ P.O. Box 5050 Centre for Criminal Justice Studies, Hazen Hall 16. University of New Brunswick, Saint John, NB E2L 4A5
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- ³ Andrews, D. & Wormith, S. (1984). *Criminal Sentiments and criminal behaviour. Programs Branch User Report*. Ottawa, ON: Solicitor General Canada.
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- ⁷ Op.Cit., Dowden & Andrews (1999); and Simourd & Andres (1994).
- ⁸ Shaw, M. (1991). *Survey of Federally Sentenced Women: Report to the Task force on Federally Sentenced Women*. Ottawa: Solicitor General of Canada.
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New Research Briefs recently published

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B-31 *Intensive Supervision Practices: A Preliminary Examination (ISP)*

Date of Publication: 07-2003

By: Ralph Serin, Ben Vuong and Shandy Briggs

Women with violent offence histories: A comparison

Amey Bell¹

Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada

Unlike previous research² which has typically profiled women offenders on several offence and sentence characteristics, the current profile involves a comparison of repeat violent women offenders to their non-violent and one-time violent counterparts. The three groups are compared on various criteria including socio-demographics, offence type, sentence length, risk and need levels. Implications for program development and intervention strategies are briefly discussed.

All available data for federally sentenced women admitted between January 1, 1995 and December 31, 2001 were extracted from the Offender Management System (OMS) of the Correctional Service of Canada. Women offenders were placed in one of three groups based on offence history: non-violent, one-time violent, and repeat violent (Table 1). A "violent" categorization included women convicted of Schedule I³ and homicide offences. This included both current and previous violent offences.

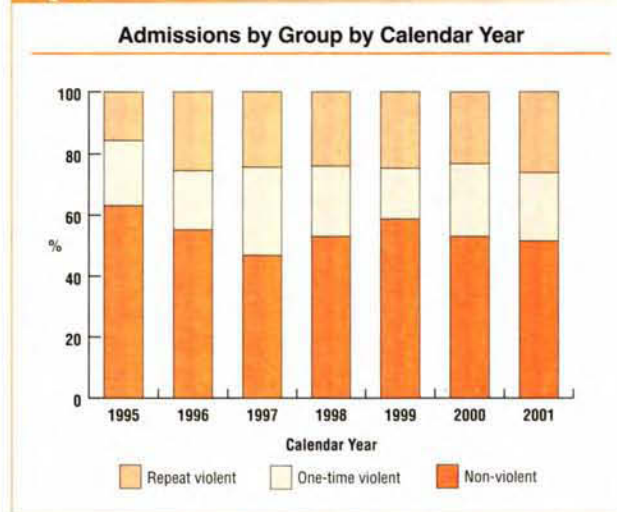
Table 1

	Comparison Groups		
	No previous violent convictions	One previous violent conviction	Two or more previous violent convictions
No current violent convictions	Non-violent	One-time violent	Repeat violent
One current violent conviction	One-time violent	Repeat violent	Repeat violent
Two or more current violent	Repeat violent	Repeat violent	Repeat violent

Admissions to custody

From January 1, 1995 to December 1, 2001, there were 1,995 women offenders admitted to federal custody in Canada. After removing women offenders under provincial jurisdiction ($n = 423$), there were 1,572 women offenders. This includes 54% non-violent ($n = 850$), 22% one-time violent ($n = 349$), and 24% repeat violent ($n = 373$) women offenders. Figure 1 presents the proportion of women offenders admitted to federal custody in each calendar year. The majority of admissions in each year were comprised of the non-violent group. However when

Figure 1



examining each group in isolation, the data suggest that there has been a consistent increase in the proportion of non-violent women offenders admitted to custody from 1995 (12%) to 2001 (21%). In addition, the proportion of women offenders in the one-time violent group has also witnessed an increase in admittance from 10% in 1995 to 23% in 2001. However, the greatest increase over the years has occurred in the repeat violent group whereby 7% of women from this group were admitted in 1995 compared to 25% in 2001.

Analyses of the proportions of women offenders in federal custody in each region revealed that the majority of the non-violent (44%) groups were incarcerated in the Ontario region, whereas the majority of the one-time violent (36%) and repeat violent (32%) groups were incarcerated in the Prairie region.

Demographic information

In general, women offenders can be characterized as Caucasian, single, and between the ages of 26 to 35 years old. However, there were notable significant differences between the three groups with regard to marital status and racial composition. More specifically, significantly higher proportions of one-time violent (32%) and repeat violent (31%) women offenders were Aboriginal⁴ compared to their

non-violent counterparts (12%). In contrast, a significantly higher proportion of non-violent women offenders were comprised of Black and "other"⁵ races compared to the one-time violent and repeat violent groups. In terms of marital status, a higher proportion of one-time violent (6%) women offenders were widowed compared to the non-violent (2%) and repeat violent (2%) groups. Repeat violent (43%) women offenders were more likely to be married or common-law than non-violent (34%) women offenders and one-time violent (35%) women offenders. Alternatively, non-violent women offenders were more likely to be divorced or separated than repeat violent women offenders. There were no statistically significant differences between the three groups for mean age (34 years, 33 years, and 32 years, respectively).

Offence and sentence characteristics

An examination of specific offence categories for the three groups of women offenders identified the current and previous offences for which women have received a federal sentence. A woman may have been previously and/or are currently incarcerated for more than one offence type. Only current offences will be profiled here. The largest proportions of repeat violent women offenders are incarcerated for other non-violent (73%), assault (49%), and robbery (47%). The majority of one-time violent offenders are incarcerated for other non-violent (46%) and homicide (40%). Women offenders in the non-violent group are currently incarcerated for drug offences (72%) and/or other non-violent offences (57%).

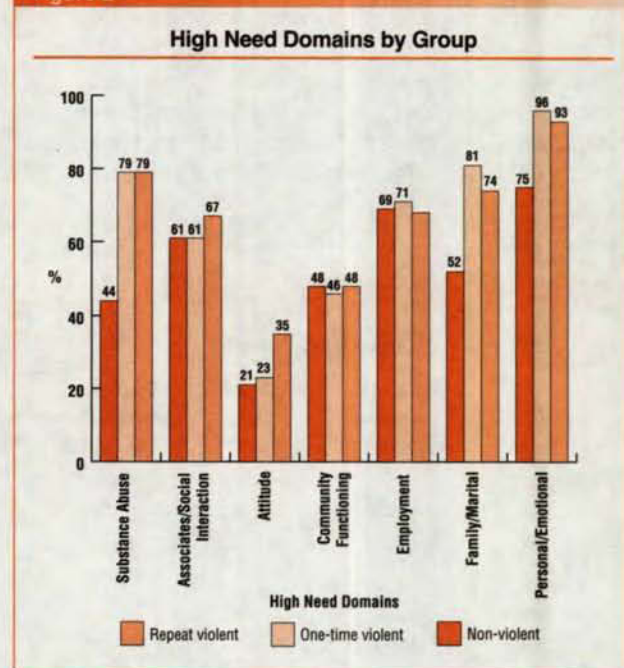
When compared to one-time violent women, significantly higher proportions of repeat violent women offenders were incarcerated for assault (49% vs. 18%), robbery (47% vs. 21%), sexual offences (6% vs. 3%), other violent offences (30% vs. 11%), and other non-violent offences (73% vs. 46%). Alternatively, the one-time violent group was more likely to be incarcerated for homicide than the repeat violent group (40% and 15%, respectively). As a result of grouping women offenders based on number and type of offences, these results are not surprising.

The majority of non-violent, one-time violent, and repeat violent women offenders are serving a sentence of less than three years (65%, 56%, and 60%, respectively). In addition, 13% of women in the one-time violent group and 5% in the repeat violent group are serving life or indeterminate sentences. There were no statistically significant differences in the mean aggregate sentence length between the three groups (2.9 years, 2.9 years, and 2.8 years, respectively)⁶.

Dynamic need and risk factors

For the purpose of identifying offender criminogenic needs, domain need levels at intake to federal custody were extracted. Data were available for 1,329 women offenders. Upon examination of the seven need domains, significant differences were found between the three groups for the following needs: attitude, family/marital, personal/emotional, and substance abuse. More specifically (see Figure 2), significantly larger proportions of one-time and repeat violent women offenders were rated as having "some or considerable need for improvement" in the family/marital, personal/emotional, and substance abuse need domains than non-violent women offenders. Additionally, repeat violent women offenders were also more likely to have "some or considerable need" in the attitude domain than non-violent and one-time violent women offenders.

Figure 2



An examination of overall need and risk demonstrated that the majority of repeat violent women offenders are rated as high need but medium risk. One-time violent women are generally assessed as medium need and medium risk. Non-violent women represent a low risk but are medium need. Significant differences between the groups were further revealed. Compared to non-violent women offenders (13%), significantly higher proportions of one-time violent (44%) and repeat violent (51%) women were assessed as high need for program intervention. Similarly, higher proportions of women in the one-time violent (33%) and repeat violent (31%) groups were assessed as high risk to re-offend than women

in the non-violent (3%) group. No significant differences were found between the one-time violent and repeat violent groups for overall need and risk.

Conclusion

Based on these comparisons, it appears that women offenders comprising of the one-time and repeat violent groups were most similar. For instance, women offenders comprising of the violent groups are more likely to be Aboriginal, to be assessed as higher need, and higher risk than their non-violent counterparts. The Spirit of a Warrior program⁷ a culturally appropriate program for Aboriginal women offenders convicted of violent offences, offers great potential as an intervention for these women offenders. Similar to the high needs domains

reported here, earlier research⁸ has also concluded that women offenders demonstrate high need in the areas of substance abuse problems, family and marital relationships, and personal or emotional issues. Overall, these findings have important implications for the design and delivery of programs that target criminogenic needs among the women offender population. It is also clear that program intervention may need to be based upon offence profiles, including criminal history and offence cycles. As such, a program may vary in intensity and content according to the extent of violence committed by each offender. This profile provides further evidence of the varying levels of need and risk among the women offender population and reinforces the need for a violence prevention program that incorporates these differences. ■

¹ 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, ON K1A 0P9

² Sinclair, R.L., & Boe, R. (2002). *Canadian Federal Women Offender Profiles: Trends from 1981 to 2002*. Research Report R-131, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada. Also see Trevethan, S. (1999). Women in federal and provincial-territorial correctional facilities. *Forum of Corrections Research*, 11(3), 9-12.

³ Schedule 1 offences include but are not limited to manslaughter, attempted murder, sexual assault, assault, arson, robbery, use of a firearm, criminal harassment, and kidnapping.

⁴ Aboriginal includes First Nations, Metis, and Inuit.

⁵ Other includes Asiatic, Chinese, South Asian, South East Asian, Arab, East Indian, Hispanic, Filipino, Latin American, and "other" races.

⁶ Lifers were excluded.

⁷ In consultation with Native Counseling Services of Alberta, the Spirit of a Warrior program was adapted from the In Search of Your Warrior program for violent Aboriginal male offenders. It has been delivered at Saskatchewan Penitentiary (women's co-located unit), Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women, Edmonton Institution for Women, and Okimaw Ochi Healing Lodge. The goals of the program are to help women understand their acts of violence and the impacts of inter-generational violence. Ultimately, it aims to reduce and eliminate violent behaviour.

⁸ Op. cit. Trevethan, S. (1999). Also see, Dell, C.A., & Boe, R. (2000). *An Examination of Aboriginal and Caucasian Women Offender Risk and Need Factors*. Research Report R-94, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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A profile of federally-sentenced women on conditional release

Kelly Taylor and Jillian Flight¹

Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada

Almost all offenders who receive a custodial sentence will eventually return to society, and most federal offenders in Canada will serve a portion of their sentence in the community under the supervision of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). Those released into the community prior to the expiration of their sentence may be released on day parole, full parole, or statutory release². Currently, women constitute a relatively small percentage of the total federal offender population (approximately 4%). However, of these federal women offenders, 56% are serving their sentence while on supervised release in the community. As a result, the field of community corrections relating to women has gained considerable interest over the past several years.

Legally, the Correctional Service of Canada operates under the 1992 Corrections and Conditional Release Act. This act 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; and by assisting in the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community as law abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and the community³.

Offender reintegration has been defined as all correctional and programming activity conducted to prepare an offender to return safely to the community as a law-abiding citizen⁴. 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 of decision makers, as well as gaining a complete understanding of the objective classification procedures that play a major role in the timely and safe release of women offenders. Operationally, safe reintegration encompasses a broad range of decisions intended to place the women offenders in the least restrictive setting possible, grant temporary absence or conditional release, and invoke suspension or revocation of conditional release when necessary.

An integral aspect of this process is the Offender Intake Assessment (OIA), which all women sentenced to federal corrections undergo⁵. The OIA process is a comprehensive and integrated evaluation

of the offender at the time of admission to the federal system that involves the collection and analysis of information on a number of factors relevant in determining criminal risk and identifying offender needs⁶. A variety of assessments inform decisions regarding an offender's level of motivation, security level, and reintegration potential, ultimately resulting in the development of a correctional plan specific to each individual offender and a decision of institutional placement. In addition to being central to daily operations in the long-term management of offenders, the OIA process provides a comprehensive database that can be used to produce distinct profiles of various segments of the offender population.

Researchers such as Motiuk and Blanchette⁷, Motiuk and Nafekh⁸, and Andrews and Dowden⁹ have demonstrated these measures of risk and need to be good predictors of outcome while on parole. Once the offender's criminogenic need areas have been appropriately targeted by the OIA, a level of service that is best suited to the individual offender is determined. 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.

Through the OIA process, the Correctional Service has made considerable progress in incorporating static and systematic risk assessment into the development of correctional plans in a manner that respects the risk and need principles of effective offender management¹⁰. The correctional plan is the pivotal document that defines the best professional opinion on how the agency intends to manage the offenders sentence and what expectations the agency has for the offender. More specifically, the correctional plan includes long term, time-referenced goals, program requirements, offender specific supervision techniques, and behavioral indicators related to the offenders' crime cycle. This is the foundation upon which release is predicted and often the basis upon which discretionary release is supported or denied.

The CSC and the National Parole Board (NPB) are committed to ensuring the safe and timely reintegration of offenders into the community. Frequency of contact standards, special release conditions, and restrictions that the NPB imposes

upon newly released offenders to facilitate safe reintegration, are used in part to meet this objective.

Each of these areas, from the comprehensive OIA process, to the principles of effective treatment and management of offenders, to special conditions upon release, are essential elements of community corrections. As such, a profile of women offenders in the community should include women who are currently under supervision in the community, and examine the complex interplay of factors that contribute to their reintegration.

Who are the women in the community?

As of March 1, 2004, there were 449 women offenders under federal supervision in the community. The earliest release date for this snapshot of women was June 1962 and the most recent release date was February 2004. The average age of these women offenders is 39.5, the youngest being 19 and the eldest 89 years of age. The majority of women offenders in the community are either single (41%) or married/common-law (39%). In addition, 12% of the women offenders are divorced or separated, 5% are widowed and for the remaining 3% marital status is either not yet determined or simply unknown.

An examination of the racial composition of these women offenders reveals that 60% are Caucasian, 19% a visible minority (including Black, Asiatic, Chinese, Filipino, Hispanic, Japanese, Latin American, South Asian and South East Asian), 17% Aboriginal (including Inuit, Métis and First Nations) and 4% are classified as 'other'. Interestingly, yet not surprisingly, a breakdown of race by region shows that the population of women offenders in the community coincides with the population base of Canada as a whole. That is, findings indicate that the Ontario and Pacific regions have the most heterogeneous population, the Prairie region has a large Aboriginal population, while the Atlantic and Quebec regions have the most homogeneous populations.

When considering the most recent admission type of these women offenders, results indicate that the majority (79%) were admitted on a 'warrant of committal'. A further 10% were admitted as a result of 'revocation without an offence', 7% as a 'transfer from a foreign country', 3% as a result of 'revocation with an offence', and the remaining 1% were admitted as a result of other circumstances.

When examining the offences committed by these women, the following patterns appear. The most commonly cited offences are drug related, as 43% of the women were currently incarcerated for such an offence. Further, 25% were incarcerated for homicide

offences, 14% for robbery offences, 13% for assault offences, 1% for sexual offences and 55% were "other" offences¹¹.

Risk and needs at intake and post-release

As previously mentioned, motivation level is assessed during the OIA process through the examination of past performance within the institution and/or community. It is important to note that clearly, the majority of these women were very motivated upon admission as 73% received an assessment of being highly motivated to participate in their correctional plan. Only 3% were identified as having a low motivation level and 24% as a moderate level of motivation.

An offender's criminogenic needs are also identified during the OIA, via the Dynamic Factors Identification and Analysis (DFIA)¹². The DFIA considers various aspects of an offender's personality and life circumstances. Data are clustered into seven target domains, with multiple indicators for each: marital/family (31 indicators), personal/emotional orientation (46 indicators), substance abuse (29 indicators), employment (35 indicators), associates/social interaction (11 indicators), community functioning (21 indicators), and attitude (24 indicators)¹³. Each domain is rated as an 'asset to community adjustment', 'no need for improvement', 'some need for improvement', or 'considerable need for improvement'.

An overall examination of the criminogenic needs upon intake revealed that 34% of the women were rated as low, 38% as moderate, and 28% as high. Interestingly, an examination of these needs post-release revealed that 47% of the women were rated as low, 34% as moderate, and 19% as high. This finding suggests that criminogenic needs are decreasing over time. However, making any substantive conclusions or interpretations regarding this finding is beyond the scope of this article.

Table 1 provides the percentages of women with needs in each of the seven target domains as identified at intake and post-release. Upon reviewing this table, it becomes evident that in the majority of instances, the needs of these women changed in an encouraging direction. That is, after release, we see higher proportions of women identified with needs being an 'asset to community adjustment' or having 'no need for improvement', and lower proportions of women identified with needs of requiring 'some' or 'considerable' improvement. Once again, no direct conclusions or interpretations regarding this finding can be made in this article.

Table 1

Need Domains	Need Domains							
	Percentages of Women with Identified Needs							
	At Intake				Post-Release			
	Asset	No	Some	Consid.	Asset	No	Some	Consid.
Family	11	42	31	16	18	42	31	9
Attitude	21	53	17	9	36	49	11	4
Employment	8	39	42	11	14	47	34	5
Substance Abuse	N/A	52	15	33	N/A	62	19	19
Community Functioning	8	56	33	3	15	57	26	2
Associates/Social Interaction	7	39	41	13	18	44	32	6
Personal/Emotional Orientation	N/A	23	45	32	N/A	39	44	17

Note: N/A = Not Applicable, **Asset** = Asset to community adjustment, **No** = No need for improvement, **Some** = Some need for improvement, **Consid.** = Considerable need for improvement.

Although reviewing all of the indicators for each target domain is beyond the scope of this article, the authors selected five specific indicators. These indicators are related to areas such as education, employment, number of dependents and the use of alcohol and/or drugs. For this particular group of women in the community, upon admission to an institution, 60% had no high school diploma, 65% were unemployed at the time of their arrest, 38% were abusing drugs, 25% were abusing alcohol and 60% had dependents.

When reviewing the risk levels assessed at intake, findings reveal that 51% of the women are identified as being low risk to re-offend, 35% were rated as moderate risk and 14% as high risk. After release, 62% of the women are identified as low risk to re-offend, 29% as moderate risk and 9% as high risk. Again, these findings suggest that assessed levels of risk decrease slightly over time.

Location, type and conditions of release

An examination of the releasing regions of these women revealed that 7% were released in the Atlantic region, 18% in the Quebec region, 41% in the Ontario region, 24% in the Prairie region, and 10% in the Pacific region. Further examination revealed that the majority of these women (73%) were released on day parole, 14% on full parole, and 13% on statutory release.

The conditions of release that were imposed upon the women were also examined. In order to simplify the output, those conditions of release dealing with similar issues such as addictions, counselling, or the avoidance of persons or places, were combined. About one-third (33%) of the conditions of release

dealt with the abstinence of an addiction (16% intoxicants, 9% drugs, 7% alcohol, 1% gambling). Another one-third (31%) of the conditions dealt with the avoidance of persons or places (25% persons, 6% places). Approximately thirteen percent of the conditions involved counselling (12% psychological, 1% psychiatric), 10% involved following a treatment plan, 2% involved residing at a specific place, and the remaining 11% were classified as other.

What have women in the community been involved in?

Employment provided by CSC's institutions appear to be the most frequently utilized program by women in the community. Second to this are educational programs and living skills programming. Third are substance abuse programs. There does not appear to be any substantial regional differences in the programs being utilized. Table 2 provides a rank order listing of the programs being utilized by federally sentenced women serving their sentence in the community as of March 1, 2004.

Conclusion

The present profile of women in the community demonstrates how integral the area of community corrections is to both the criminal justice system and to society as a whole. Encompassing numerous aspects of corrections such as risk and need levels at intake and release, motivation levels, as well as programs post-release, community corrections is a continuously evolving avenue of study for researchers interested in the process of criminal justice from sentencing through to reintegration and beyond. The present profile has implications for

Table 2

Programs

1. CSC Institutional Employment
2. Educational Programs
2. Living Skills Programming
3. Substance Abuse Programs
4. Personal Development Programming
4. Women Programs
5. Aboriginal Programs
5. Psychological Programming
6. Corcan Institutional Employment
7. Family Violence Programs
8. Violent Offender Programming
9. HIV/AIDS Services
10. Physical Health Care Services
11. Special Needs Programs
12. Mental Health Care Services
13. Chaplaincy

policy and operations within the area of community corrections. Issues such as the location, type, and conditions of release, examined in the present profile, are essential features to be considered in the development of programs. A profile of women in the community demonstrating that the majority of women released to a specific area tend to be aboriginal, for example, suggests that the availability of programs sensitive to the needs of aboriginal peoples may be critical to a woman's success upon release. Similarly, programs implemented should consider issues such as type of parole, as this greatly impacts time frames in which programs should be offered, as well as the appropriate length of programs offered. Furthermore, as evident in the present profile, many women released into the community have conditions of release imposed on them regarding such issues as addictions and counseling, both of which are substantial factors to consider in program development and implementation.

As further conclusions or implications were beyond the scope of this article, future research in this area should focus on examining the risk and need level of offenders upon intake and after release, investigating and attempting to gain a thorough understanding of any changes that occur. Furthermore, evaluation of the programs being utilized after release into the community is necessary in order to ensure that, once released, the most effective methods are in place for a smooth and successful reintegration. ■

¹ 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, ON K1A 0P9

² Brown, S. (2001). "Encouraging community release and appropriate supervision," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 13(1), 41-45.

³ Corrections and Conditional Release Act, RSC, C-20, 1992.

⁴ Thurber, A. (1998). "Understanding offender reintegration," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 10(1), 14-19.

⁵ Motiuk, L. (1997). "Classification for correctional programming: The offender intake assessment (OIA) process," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 9 (1), 18-22.

⁶ Motiuk, L. (1993). "Where are we in our ability to assess risk?" *Forum on Corrections Research*, 5(2), 14-21.

⁷ Motiuk, L., & Blanchette, K. "Assessing Women Offenders: What Works," *Assessment to Assistance: Programs for Women in Community Corrections*, M. McMahon, Ed. (Lanham, MD: American Correctional Association, 2000).

⁸ Motiuk, L., & Nafekh, M. (1999). "Reintegration potential profiles for federally sentenced women," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 11(3), 13-17.

⁹ Andrews, D., & Dowden, C. (1999). "A meta-analytic investigation into effective correctional intervention for female offenders", *Forum on Corrections Research*, 11(3), 18-21.

¹⁰ The four principles of effective treatment are risk, need, responsivity and the role of the professional and the integrity of assessment as identified by Andrews and Bonta. Andrews, D., & Bonta, J. (2003). *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, 3rd Ed. (Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing Company).

¹¹ This may include multiple offences that the women are currently incarcerated for and will therefore not sum to 100%.

¹² Creation of the institutional Dynamic Factors Identification and Analysis (DFIA) is based on the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale (CRNMS), developed by L. Motiuk and F. Porporino and implemented by CSC in 1990.

¹³ See Correctional Service of Canada's Standard Operating Practice 700-04 for a complete listing of indicators.

Coming up in *FORUM on Corrections Research*

The December 2004 issue of *FORUM* will focus on "Employment".

Development and validation of a Security Reclassification Scale for women

Kelley Blanchette and Kelly Taylor¹
Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada

Classification of offender populations is one of the most important functions of any correctional agency. Objective security classification systems are needed to ensure that excessive controls are not imposed on offenders, to help direct the use of limited resources and generate accurate information for long-term accommodation planning. Security classification provides corrections officials with both a practical and legal framework to address problematic inmate behaviour, to establish intervention strategies, and to maximize the management potential of correctional institutions. Importantly, this must all be achieved within a legislative framework that mandates the **least restrictive measures of confinement for offenders.**

There are two principal ways of aggregating information to make a classification decision: actuarial (sometimes called the 'statistical' or 'mechanical' method), and clinical. The actuarial method grounds decision-making in statistical relationships². It involves formal, objective procedures to combine and weight factors that render a score and recommendation for decision. Relevant variables are selected and mathematically combined and weighted such that their statistical association with the criterion of interest is maximized^{3,4}. The weighting of factors is performed according to a set of objective, pre-defined criteria that do not vary as a function of the decision-maker. Thus, clear guidelines are established a priori in terms of what information should be collected, how it should be collected, where it should be collected from, and lastly, how it should be combined.

The clinical method relies mostly on professional judgement that is based on informal, subjective techniques, sometimes including case conferencing strategies. In general, there are no strict pre-defined regulations governing what information should be considered, how it should be measured, which information sources should be used, or how the information should be combined and weighted. With this method, the assessor's professional judgement determines how best to select, combine and weight the information. Thus, the rules vary across decision-makers as well as the individual about whom the decision is being made⁵.

Actuarial tools have demonstrated superiority over clinical judgment in accomplishing classification

goals; in general, they are both more liberal and more accurate than the clinical method⁶. Unfortunately, the objective classification measures currently in use for women inmates (in Canada and abroad) have invariably been developed for men. This, despite evidence to suggest that there may be gender-specific risk factors for women, and that measures derived from samples of male offenders may overclassify women^{7,8}.

Amid calls for the cessation of applying male-based measures to women offenders^{9,10,11}, Correctional Service of Canada's Deputy Commissioner for Women commissioned the development of a gender-specific security reclassification scheme. Over a two-year time frame (1998-2000), the Research Branch developed an empirically derived, objective Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW).

In brief, the SRSW was created as follows: A 'candidate' pool of predictor variables ($n = 176$) was created based on: 1) a review of research on the risk factors of female offenders, 2) consultation with the researchers involved in creation of prior classification scales, and 3) consultation with administrators and field staff working with federally sentenced women. These 176 variables included some historical risk factors, but were predominantly composed of dynamic behavioural factors such as program progress and motivation, drug and alcohol use, recent institutional behaviour (e.g., charges and incidents), social support, marital/family adjustment, and so on.

The 'candidate' predictor variables were examined for a sample comprised of 172 women for whom offender security level (OSL) decisions were available. A total of 285 OSL decisions were coded based on the sample of 172 women. The number of decisions coded per woman ranged from 1 to 5 decisions per person. The security review is conducted periodically, and has the potential to confirm, raise or lower an offender's security classification. For the development sample, the security review period covered an average of 10 months ($SD = 9$). Of the 285 decisions sampled, 54% resulted in lowered classifications, 25% resulted in a raise in security level, and 21% did not change.

Univariate analyses were applied to the initial pool of predictors. Examination of the univariate

correlations between the variables and the OSL decision rating (rated from minimum = 1 to maximum = 3) reduced the pool of 'candidate' predictors from 176 to 39; those that correlated with the decision rating beyond ($p < .01$) were retained. The second step in reduction of the initial pool was exclusion of variables with skewed distributions: those variables with ceiling or floor effects that would not be useful in further analyses. The remaining variables were entered into a stepwise (forward) regression analysis, resulting in a model that included nine variables that accounted for 57% of the variance in OSL decisions.

After the nine predictors were selected, a simple summation prediction model¹² was applied to determine the optimal item weights for scoring the scale. To determine cut-off values for the security reclassification scores (minimum, medium, or maximum), the sample was rank ordered with respect to their scores on the reclassification scale. Cut-off values were chosen to maximize concordance with the actual security level decision made by staff. The resultant scale, the SRSW, includes the following nine weighted variables:

1. Correctional plan: program motivation.
2. Maintains regular positive family contact.
3. Number of convictions for serious disciplinary offences *during the review period*.
4. Number of recorded incidents *during the review period*.
5. History of escape or unlawfully at large from work release, temporary absences *or* community supervision.
6. Pay level *during the review period*.
7. Number of times offender was placed in involuntary segregation for being a danger to others or the institution *during the review period*.
8. Total number of successful escorted temporary absences (ETAs) *during the review period*.
9. Custody Rating Scale Incident History.

The SRSW has an approximate 30-point scoring range, with higher scores representing higher assessed risk and resulting in a higher security rating recommendation.

Following the scale development, the focus shifted to validation. Using an independent sample of women's security review decisions (automated data extracted from the Offender Management System), researchers examined various aspects of reliability and validity of the SRSW with separate analyses for Aboriginal women and women serving life

sentences. Overall, results provided strong support for use of the scale to guide security review decisions for all federally-sentenced women inmates.

The final phase of the project involved extensive practical application of the scale via a national field test. Staff members from each of the women's facilities (as well as the co-located units, regional psychiatric centre, and regional reception centre) were solicited to participate in the field testing, and received comprehensive training in May 2000, and booster training in March 2002. Data collection for the field test began in July 2000, and continued until June 2003. Over that three-year period, every time an offender security level (OSL) review was completed for a federal woman inmate, staff were asked to complete the SRSW as well. Our data show virtually 100% compliance by field staff, rendering 580 completed reclassification scales over the course of the field test.

Preliminary results of the field test are very promising. The SRSW has demonstrated good internal consistency, with $\alpha = .69$, and a mean item-to-total correlation of .50. This suggests that the scale items are appropriately converging on a single underlying dimension. Our results also revealed that the scale shows excellent convergent validity; correlations with independent assessments of overall need, risk, and reintegration potential were .32, .21, and -.37, respectively. All were statistically significant at $p < .0001$. Simple Pearson correlations, partialling out time at risk, between SRSW scores and number of incidents perpetrated were also highly statistically significant ($p < .0001$). Specifically, our results showed simple correlations of $r = .33$ and $r = .32$ for involvement (perpetrator) in major and minor institutional incidents, respectively.

Analyses examining predictive validity supported the results of the correlation coefficients. The Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC)¹³ was used to calculate Area Under the Curve (AUC) statistic. The AUC, which can vary between 0 and 1, is a measure of the ability of the independent variable (in this case, the SRSW) to predict the outcome (in this case, involvement in institutional incidents). An AUC of 1 would indicate a perfect ability to predict, while an AUC of .50 or less would suggest that the scale has no predictive power. Our analyses revealed AUC values of .73 for both the prediction of perpetrating 'major' and the prediction of perpetrating 'minor' institutional incidents.

It is important to highlight that analyses also examined the psychometric properties of the OSL classifications as they are currently derived with the structured clinical method. Although OSL ratings derived by the clinical method also exhibited good

convergent and predictive validity, the SRSW-derived classifications equaled or outperformed the traditional method in all of the aforementioned analyses. In addition to being more accurate than the current method of classification, the SRSW was more liberal. More specifically, relative to the OSL recommendations derived by the clinical method, the SRSW made more

classification recommendations to minimum-security and fewer to maximum-security.

We are extremely proud of these results; they lend additional credence to CSC as a world leader in state-of-the-art correctional research and practice. It is anticipated that the SRSW will be implemented nationally this calendar year. ■

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Let's Talk

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Telephone: (613) 995-5364

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Internet: <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca>

The revocation of conditionally-released women: A research summary

Dean Jones¹

Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada

The purpose and focus of this study was to identify predictors of conditional release failure amongst substance abusing women offenders and the variables associated with failure on conditional release. The sample consisted of 483 women offenders who were serving, or had recently served federal sentences under the supervision of Correctional Services Canada (CSC). All women had been identified as having a substance abuse problem at intake assessment. The conditional release of the women offenders included day parole, full parole, and statutory release.

Assessment

Prior to release, it is necessary to assess the likelihood that the offender will commit another offence before the expiration of his or her sentence. One aspect of the risk principle for effective correctional programming is that recidivism can be predicted at better than chance levels if relevant criminogenic factors are considered². Although this principle can be applied across various sub-populations of offenders, it is likely that the relevancy of certain risk and need factors vary. In hopes of identifying predictors of conditional release failure, this study identifies prominent risk and need factors within the sub-population of federal substance abusing women offenders.

In a meta-analytic review, Gendreau, Little and Goggin³ reported that factors such as antisocial companions, antisocial cognitions, antisocial personality, criminal history, and substance abuse were some of the strongest predictors of criminal recidivism. Researchers have generally found that recidivism or return to custody for women offenders is associated with problems in the criminogenic need areas of education/employment⁴; marital/family⁵; antisocial associates⁶, and antisocial attitudes⁷.

Substance Abuse Treatment

The efficacy of substance abuse treatment in reducing recidivism has not yet been clearly demonstrated in research with women offenders. In their meta-analysis, Dowden and Andrews⁸ found that whether or not programs targeted substance abuse was not significantly correlated with reductions in recidivism for women ($r = -.01$). This suggests that substance abuse treatment may not result in reductions in recidivism for women offenders. However, Dowden

and Blanchette⁹ reported that, within a sample of 44 substance abusing women offenders who were recommended for substance abuse treatment, the 27 who received such treatment had a significantly lower recidivism rate than their untreated counterparts. In the present study, revocation rates were compared between women who completed any substance abuse treatment program while incarcerated, and those who did not.

Variables

Several independent variables were examined: age, admission offence type, substance abuse treatment, and the (CIS) Community Intervention Scale (formerly known as the Community Risk/Management Scale¹⁰). The CIS defines seven domains that may be contributing factors to an individual's reoffending: Employment, Marital/Family Relations, Associates and Social Interaction, Substance Abuse, Community Functioning, Personal/Emotional Orientation, and Attitude. Three types of conditional release failure were considered (a) general revocation, (b) revocation with a new offence, and (c) revocation with a new violent offence. Revocation was defined as returning to federal custody after release and before warrant expiry. The base rate of general revocation was high (48%), revocation with a new offence was moderate (16%); revocation with a new violent offence was low (4%). For the most part, variables that predicted the more specific outcomes were also associated with the most general revocation variable.

Background

Most federally sentenced women offenders are granted parole and complete their sentences while living in the community. All participants had been granted a conditional release between January 1, 1995 and December 31, 2000: 73% of the women were released on day parole ($n = 353$); 9% were released on full parole ($n = 41$), and 18% were released at their statutory release date ($n = 89$). The average age of the women at release was 32.63 years ($SD = 8.08$); their ages ranged from 18 to 57.

Admitting Offences

Admission offence type was scored from the Offender Management Database (OMS; CSC's automated

record system). Each admission offence was coded as falling into one of several distinct categories: (a) Drug (e.g. possession, trafficking), (b) Fraud/Theft/Break and Enter, (c) Miscellaneous Nonviolent (e.g. court order breaches, impaired driving, etc.), (d) Assault (e.g. assault, assault causing bodily harm, etc.), (e) Robbery, (f) Sexual, (g) Homicide (e.g. murder, manslaughter, infanticide), (h) Miscellaneous Violent (e.g. firearms offences, kidnapping). It should be noted that although the categories were distinct, offenders often had more than one admitting offence.

Revocation

Age was significantly and negatively associated with revocation. Several admission offence types were positively associated with revocation including theft, miscellaneous non-violent offences, and robbery demonstrated a significant association with revocation: employment, associates, substance abuse, community, and attitude. The overall CIS Need and Risk ratings also demonstrated a moderate association with revocation failure. Having completed substance abuse treatment was not associated with conditional release outcome.

Predictors

A backwards logistic regression reduced the list of predictive variables to six unique predictors: age, overall CIS need rating, employment needs, substance abuse rating, attitude, and having an admission offence of theft, fraud, or break and enter. These results suggest that the prediction of post-release outcome for substance abusing women can be improved by attending to the noted risk and need factors.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that are predictive of revocation of conditional release for substance abusing women. In sum, the base rate of revocation in this sample (48%) was considerably higher than that reported in earlier research studies. However, the sample for this study consisted of only substance abusing women, who are at greater risk for recidivism compared to women who do not have substance abuse problems.

Age at release was negatively associated with revocation; and release age made a significant unique contribution towards predicting revocation in the regression model. Overall, it appears that age is a significant risk factor for substance abusing women offenders. Notably, type of release was not related to revocation: the rates of revocation, revocation with a new offence, and revocation with a new violent offence were the same across each type of release.

Examination of release conditions indicated that there were regional variations on the number of conditions imposed upon offenders. Women in Ontario received the most conditions, and women in the Prairie region received the least number of conditions. Regional variations in the number of conditions imposed do not appear to be related to risk or need levels. The authors of this study speculate that this variation may be attributed to differences amongst the decision-making bodies. Interestingly, the nature and number of imposed release conditions were not related to revocation rates. It was expected that the number of conditions would be positively associated with revocation: that high-risk offenders would be subject to more conditions, and would be supervised more closely, thereby increasing their chances of "failure". This hypothesis was not borne out. Prospective research might examine this issue further by looking at the nature and number of conditions in relation to the precise reasons for revocation.

It was interesting to note that relatively few substance abusing women had conditions imposed related to drugs and alcohol. This contradicts the thought that women offenders with substance abuse problems are likely to fail on conditional release because of imposed conditions related to their addiction.

Several interesting associations between admitting offence and conditional release revocation were observed. Having a current theft/fraud/break and enter offence was a moderate predictor of revocation, and revocation with a new offence. Similarly, the miscellaneous non-violent category was also associated with revocation. Having a current drug offence was not associated with revocation. Robbery was the only type of violent admitting offence that was positively associated with revocation. Notably, having a current offence involving homicide was associated with lower rates of reincarceration.

The logistic regression analysis indicated that the current offence of theft/fraud/or break and enter was the strongest single offence type predictor, and that it captured the predictive aspects of the other admission offence variables. The results suggest that a simple indicator of "severity of current offence" may not be an appropriate risk indicator for substance abusing women offenders. Instead of gauging the severity of the crime, it may be more appropriate to categorize offences according to if they were motivated by monetary gain (excluding drug offences). This variable might be particularly salient amongst women who have a substance abuse problem because having a serious drug addiction makes it difficult to hold down a job, and because maintaining an addiction is expensive. This hypothesis is tentative, and will require further investigation in a sample that includes

women who have a substance abuse problem, and women who do not have a substance abuse problem.

The study also found that substance abusing women offenders had more needs than non-substance abusers, and that they had higher need levels overall. In the present sample of substance abusing women, the prevalence rates of identified needs across six of the seven CIS domains were higher than those based on a large mixed sample of women offenders, as reported by Dowden et al.¹¹

It was surprising to find that 80% of the sample were identified as having a substance abuse problem at release, because 100% of the sample was identified as having a substance abuse problem at intake. Results indicated that the differences between intake assessment and release assessment were, in part, attributable to offenders having addressed their substance abuse problems through treatment. It is also possible that some offenders addressed their problems without treatment. Alternatively, the differences may be attributable to the assessment process. Assessment at admission and assessment at release may have been informed by different facts. Lastly, the workers who assessed the same facts at intake and release may have disagreed with respect to the appropriate rating. Further research on the inter-rater reliability of the OIA process and the CIS might help to clarify this matter.

Five of the seven Community Intervention Scale need domains were significantly associated with recidivism: Employment, Associates, Substance Abuse, Community and Attitude. The overall CIS Risk and Need ratings were also moderate predictors of revocation. These results are largely consistent with those of Dowden et al.¹², who

examined the predictive validity of the CIS within a sample of women offenders. The exception was that the Personal/Emotional domain was predictive in their sample, but it was not within the current sample of substance abusing women.

The regression analyses indicated that most of the CIS domains were independent predictors of revocation. The overall risk rating, and the community functioning domain did not make unique contributions towards predicting revocation. The results indicated that both of these variables overlapped considerably with the overall Need rating.

This study failed to find an association between substance abuse treatment and revocation. This finding is consistent with some prior studies^{13,14}, and inconsistent with others¹⁵. Although current results suggest that having received substance abuse treatment while incarcerated does not seem to be a predictor of conditional release success among women substance abusers, more research is still warranted.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that current assessment practices — the use of the CIS in particular — are effective within the subpopulation of substance abusing women offenders. The results support the view that substance abuse is only one of many need factors, and that consideration of other known dynamic factors is relevant and necessary in the prediction of post-release outcome. ■

Note: This article is an abstract of the original Research Report R-133 and is only a summary of the research conducted by P. Verbrugge, K. Nunes, S. Johnson and K. Taylor. The original report is posted on the Correctional Service of Canada Website.

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Low security prison for women: A best practice in Western Australia

Joanna Salomone¹

Department of Justice, Western Australia

Across jurisdictions, women prisoners have largely been 'invisible' and disadvantaged due to their relatively small numbers, the 'masculinist' orientation and militaristic nature of prisons systems and their preoccupation with containment, discipline and security over service delivery.

Rapid increases in prison populations, caused in part by the 'war on drugs' of the 1980s and 1990s, inadequate resources and escalating costs have further impoverished service delivery.

The alarming increase in prison populations has created prisoner accommodation and management problems and associated systemic crises and public outcry in a number of jurisdictions, including in respect to women's prisons. These events have served to highlight the needs of women prisoners and have forced attention to long-neglected management and service delivery issues.

The level of recognition and attention to issues within women's prisons and prisons accommodating women varies, however where reforms are being implemented, they provide noteworthy examples of best practice in women's corrections.² Western Australia has been paying attention.

Background

During the 1990s, the women prisoner population in Western Australia rose rapidly within a five-year period from 5% to 7.6% of the overall prisoner population. The number of women in the total prisoner population more than doubled from 111 in 1995/96 to 237 in 2000/01.³ At a national level, the proportion of women in the prison population rose from 4.8% in 1995 to 6.6% in 2002.⁴

Women prisoners in Western Australia currently number 218 (as at 8 January 2004). Of those, 120 are non-Aboriginal and 98 are Aboriginal. Aboriginal women comprise around 40% of the female prisoner population, while Aboriginal people overall constitute only 3.2% of the Western Australian population.⁵

Of particular concern have been equity issues identified in respect to accommodation standards and access to services and programs, as well as particular issues affecting women prisoners, including parenting and family issues, health needs and so on.

In response, a *Women Accommodation Strategy* was developed by the Western Australian Department of Justice. In December 1998, a previously 'mothballed' juvenile facility, Nyandi was reopened to house low-security adult women prisoners.⁶ The facility provided a 'spill over' for Bandyup Women's Prison, the only dedicated women's prison in the state. (Some regional facilities also accommodate women.)

This 'temporary' measure provided a relatively less restrictive environment for low-security women in the metropolitan area, however facilities were nevertheless grossly inadequate for adult women, particularly those with children. While policy permitted accommodation of infants with their mothers during the crucial first 12 months of life, the inadequate facilities meant relatively few children were able to remain with their mothers in prison.

Nyandi became entrenched as the second women's prison in the state while officially remaining an annex of Bandyup. Despite its limitations, the facility helped manage a rate of women's imprisonment that has been nearly double the national average.

In 2001/2002, subsequent to a change of government, the newly appointed Western Australian Attorney General, Jim McGinty, with Department of Justice officials, embarked on a fact-finding mission overseas, investigating best practice approaches to women's corrections. His *Report on a Visit to Canada, Minnesota and England*⁷ described, among others, the merits of the Canadian approach, which had more than halved the female imprisonment rate in that jurisdiction.⁷

Subsequent to the *Report on a Visit...* a project proposal for a purpose-built low-security prison for women (LSPW) was developed and approved. The overall aim of the project was *'development of a progressive new philosophy ... to achieve world's best practice in management of women prisoners'*.⁸

Rationale for new directions

During the 1970s and 1980s, a 'nothing works' attitude prevailed across correctional jurisdictions worldwide. However, more recently there has been a resurgence of interest in prison programming and rehabilitation.

Many correctional agencies now support a 'criminogenic needs' approach to rehabilitation programs. However, evaluation of 'what works' in addressing offending, has not always or necessarily addressed gender issues. Most often program opportunities and resources are directed towards prisoners designated 'high risk', for example, sex offenders and violent repeat offenders. However, relatively few women fit these categories.

'What works' programming most often means 'what works with male offenders' rather than what works for women and/or for Aboriginal women specifically. In Canada, however, women's programming is given a clear focus with particular attention to indigenous needs. Holistic approaches have been shown to work best for women and for Aboriginal people,⁹ and are far more likely to be effective if they address personal, family and social issues as well as the cultural context and the underlying causes of women's offending.^{10,11}

Where a drug-using woman was sexually abused as a child, then that issue must be addressed if 'self medication' by illicit drug taking and any associated law breaking is to stop, and if her mental health status is to improve. Similarly, if women commit fraud or engage in prostitution, underlying issues of poverty and unemployment, social alienation, lack of education and employment skills and 'sexually transmitted debt' (ie: debt incurred via male partner's activities) or other relevant issues, must be addressed. Where cultural alienation is also part of the context, fostering cultural and community connection and 'healing' may be an important aspect of programming and service delivery.

A women-specific approach is crucial if women's offending and recidivism are to be effectively addressed. Simply 'warehousing' prisoners without attending to who they are and to the underlying causes of their offending does little to prevent or reduce offending and reoffending or to protect the community from crime in the long term.

Profiling women

The 'Survey of Women Prisoners in Western Australia'¹² identified that:

- the women surveyed were generally young (72% under 36 years of age);
- a majority (63%) had children under the age of 18 years;
- most were sole parents (63% single, divorced or separated by time of release);
- 19% had been state wards at some time during their childhood;

- 40% had not completed Year 10 of schooling;
- 58% of the Aboriginal women had not completed Year 10;
- 71% were unemployed in the six months prior to arrest;
- 25% had never held a paid job (51% of the Aboriginal women);
- 67% relied on government benefits prior to arrest;
- 61% reported a previous diagnosis of physical health issue/s;
- 51% reported a previous diagnosis of mental health issue/s;
- 80% reported frequent use of alcohol/drugs prior to imprisonment;
- 67% identified a connection between their drug and alcohol use and their offending; and
- 77% reported a history of abuse either as an adult or a child.

The results of the 'Survey of Women Prisoners', along with high rates of women's imprisonment and recidivism rates in Western Australia compared to other Australian states, made it clear that the needs of the female prisoner population and Aboriginal women prisoners in particular require new approaches and strategies.

Of particular significance is the intersection of drug and alcohol issues, pervasive histories of victimization and mental health issues within a clearly, highly vulnerable population. This population consists of individuals with few skills and resources, and quite often, sole responsibility for young children. The lives of those children are severely disrupted by parental imprisonment, with long term developmental, adjustment and intergenerational implications.¹³

Positive and effective interventions could have significant intergenerational outcomes given the very high proportion of women offenders who are mothers or carers of children. Increasingly, research points to early indicators of criminal behaviour identifiable in childhood, to do with poverty, deprivation, abuse and neglect, social and economic marginalisation and family disruption — all factors linked to, caused by, and/or leading often to, the incarceration of progressive generations of individuals from the same families and communities.

To a large extent, addressing offending behaviour requires resocialization of individuals, overcoming developmental deficits and improving life chances by assisting the development of essential social, psychological, parenting, educational, vocational,

problem solving and coping skills. A focus is required on fostering the family and community connections and conditions necessary for adaptive adult functioning within society. As well, preventive approaches need to be taken to address issues for 'children at risk' and provision of individual and family support and assistance for development of parenting skills.

Operationalizing the low security prison for women

Given the limitations of existing facilities and services for low-security women in Western Australia and increasing awareness of the 'need to do things differently' in managing women offenders, the Metropolitan Low Security Prison for Women Project (LSPW) was established in 2001, with the following objectives:

- successful reintegration of women into the community together with a reduced rate of recidivism;
- an operational philosophy that recognises and incorporates the needs of women prisoners;
- reforms in the way women offenders are managed and a women's perspective in design and operation of prison facilities;
- integration of the prison into the community and community into the prison; and
- 'normalisation' of living arrangements and management approaches.

A progressive new philosophy for the LSPW was developed, based on the principles of:

- Personal responsibility and empowerment;
- Family responsibility;
- Community responsibility; and
- Respect and integrity.

The philosophy states that:

- The innovative design and daily activities of the LSPW will mirror responsibilities faced by women in everyday life and support a strong community and family focus;
- The women will contribute to society through community and voluntary work. These activities will build positive, mutually beneficial relationships with the community, enabling women to increase their capacity to take control of their lives. As prisoners return to the community, these relationships are the key to their successful integration;

- Together with improved health, work and education skills, each woman will be better able to take responsibility for her choices — thereby reducing the risk of reoffending;
- The prison aims to maximise the potential for women to positively, confidently and safely reintegrate with their families and communities;
- Community safety will be enhanced by reducing the likelihood of the women reoffending; and
- The prison environment will offer meaningful opportunities for women offenders, and rather than being isolated, the women will be supported as an integral part of the community.

The Metropolitan Low Security Prison for Women development project culminated with the commissioning of the Boronia Pre-release Centre for women offenders in May 2004 — the naming reflecting a focus on preparation of women for re-entry into the community. The Centre focuses on preparation of women offenders for re-entry into the community. The Centre provides a normalised, residential-style environment and accommodate up to 70 women. It comprises 12 units/houses, each with five bedrooms. Each woman is allocated her own bedroom and shares kitchen and other facilities with the other women in her house, including kitchen, bathroom and laundry, as is the case in a 'normal' home within the community.

There are three mother and child units — each of which will be able to accommodate two mothers and their children. Other units will also be able to accommodate women and children if required. Children to age four will be able to be accommodated with their mothers, and school-aged and other children will have access to extended visits. In addition, there is intermediate-care accommodation for women requiring temporary additional support or respite from the self-care environment.

The facility operates under a dynamic security model with staff chosen for their interpersonal skills and suitability to work with women and children in a low-security environment. A self-care model has been implemented, with women providing for their own daily needs, including cooking, cleaning, budgeting, shopping for essentials, laundry and other tasks, with the guidance and assistance of staff where necessary.

Residents participate in a 'full constructive day' of meaningful activity including education, training, work, personal development, domestic programs, and recreational opportunities. Drug management includes provision of drug treatments including pharmacological and therapeutic treatment programs.

These measures are supplemented by employment of a 'passive alert' dog on site as required along with ion detection equipment.

Selected women offenders participate in voluntary and community work. The family and community contact necessary for maintenance of essential relationships and development of re-entry supports are facilitated. Specially recruited volunteers enhance the delivery of services and provision of essential supports to the residents, their children and families.

Conclusions

The development of the Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women offenders has been based on extensive research of the literature, best practice approaches and preferred models of service delivery, and was informed by the deliberations of a Project Reference Group. This included international, interstate and local experts in the fields of women's imprisonment, restorative justice, women's health, family services, Aboriginal studies, pastoral care, women's advocacy and social policy.

Project Reference Group member Janet Sue Hamilton (lately Warden of the Edmonton Institution for Women), along with representatives of other best practice jurisdictions, contributed significantly to the development of a Western Australian model for the management of women prisoners. The provision of expert advice and program, training and operational

models facilitated development of appropriate service delivery approaches.

Another important feature has been extensive consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders. A Community Advisory Group (based on the Canadian Citizens' Advisory Committees) has provided input into project development and continues its work since operationalization of the facility, providing women with essential community contacts and opportunities. The Community Advisory Group was formed from self nominated local business and community representatives and local residents.

Boronia Pre-release Centre will set new standards for women's corrections and represents a new approach to management of women prisoners. It adopts a forward-looking model that recognises the diverse needs of women, and is intended as a benchmark for reforms across Western Australian prison services overall.

Further Information about Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women may be obtained by contacting:

Christine Ginbey
Project Manager and Superintendent
Department of Justice
Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women
14 Hayman Rd
BENTLEY
WESTERN AUSTRALIA 6000
Tel: (08) 9212 3500
Email: christine.ginbey@justice.wa.gov.au

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A correctional programming strategy for women

Doris Fortin¹

Programs Branch, Correctional Service of Canada

Introduction

The original *Correctional Program Strategy for Federally Sentenced Women* (1994) was developed prior to the opening of the regional institutions for women. Ongoing development in correctional programming (substance abuse, violence prevention, sexual offending), mental health programming (*Dialectical Behaviour Therapy and Psychosocial Rehabilitation*), education and employability programs, and social programs, as well as research in the area of programming for women offenders² prompted the need to update the *Strategy*.

The revised *Program Strategy for Women Offenders* will provide a framework for program development and program implementation for women offenders to help women maintain their high rate of success to reintegrate safely into the community at the earliest possible time. Approximately 60% of women offenders under federal jurisdiction are on conditional release in the community at any given time. While the figure varies from region to region, overall, women offenders have a high reintegration potential; a high level of motivation to take charge of their lives; they are active participants in the supervision process; and, are receptive to the forms of assistance they are being offered.

The revised *Strategy* will outline the distinctions to be made between correctional programs, mental health programs, and other programs (e.g., Education, Employability and Social programs). This distinction however does not mean that all programs should not "be integrated and have a mutually reinforcing effect"³. Interventions are multiple, may be different, but most importantly, all interventions support the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC's) reintegration efforts with offenders. The intent of the *Strategy* is to provide CSC staff, the women themselves, and other stakeholders with a scope of the Reintegration Programs available to women, to provide guidelines for the delivery of those programs, and the rationale for each type of intervention in relation to CSC's reintegration efforts.

Programming for Women Offenders

While women offenders are held accountable for their behaviour, interventions must take into account the social, political and cultural context unique to

women in society. "Crime is a choice, or series of choices, made according to the social context" and mediated by an individual's perception of her environment"⁴. CSC's reintegration efforts are designed to offer an increased number of pro-social choices to help women become law-abiding citizens.

Although some basic elements of effective correctional programming may apply to both men and women offenders, there are some elements that differentiate the two. Gender-specific programming must reflect an understanding of the psychological development of women. Current thinking in this area suggests that women place great value in the development and maintaining of relationships⁵. While social learning theories and cognitive behavioural interventions have proven effective with offender populations of both genders⁶, some academics⁷, believe that relational theory is an approach that adds effectiveness to programming for women. Therefore, "situational pressures such as the loss of valued relationships play a greater role in female offending"⁸. Relational theory focuses on building and maintaining positive connections and relationships. The main goal is to increase women's capacity to engage in mutually empathic and mutually empowering relationships. To enable change, women need to develop relationships that are not reflective of previous loss or abuse⁹.

There is international support for the development and implementation of correctional programs that are gender specific.¹⁰ The Correctional Service of Canada, in the past decade, has set standards of practice that are based on research that is sensitive to the unique situation of women offenders.¹¹ Consequently, the practice of delivering non-gender specific programs to women offenders is dissipating. When considering intervention with women offenders, it is important to take into account the similarities and differences with men. Studies based on women offenders highlight the range and density of presenting difficulties¹². Not all difficulties are criminogenic though, and while it is recognized that to be effective, institutional and community interventions must focus on factors that contribute directly to offending for women offenders, there are important responsivity issues to take into consideration (e.g. victimization experiences).¹³

Programs for women must use an approach that is relevant in dealing with the multi-faceted needs of women offenders as opposed to narrow windows of issues. Women need to address emotional regulation issues which underlie other needs such as cognitive functioning and/or substance abuse. Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and Women Offender Substance Abuse Program (WOSAP) are approaches that address emotional regulation needs as well as cognitive functioning and/or substance abuse. *Spirit of a Warrior* is a program which also addresses the multi-faceted needs of Aboriginal women though the focus is on violence prevention and anger management issues. Referrals to programs such as DBT, WOSAP, and *Spirit of a Warrior* allow for the targeting of the main risk factors while providing a holistic framework for healing. Voluntary participation in Survivors of Abuse and Trauma Programs provide a complement to complete the circle of healing for women who wish or need to address past issues of victimisation.

Education, Employability and Social Programs

While correctional programs and mental health programs focus on the individual and the factors

that directly contribute to pro-criminal behaviour, education and employability programs, and social programs are interventions that focus on the safe integration of offenders into society. Education programs are interventions that have been shown to reduce recidivism and also function as preparation to participate in other programs such as employability programs and correctional programs. Employability programs are interventions that focus directly on increasing job readiness of offenders. Social programs such as Community Integration, Leisure Education, Parenting Skills, and Canine Programs help offenders to identify pro-social lifestyles, to choose activities that will integrate them as productive members of society and law-abiding citizens. Women offenders are encouraged to participate in activities and social programs relevant to their interests and needs. Social programs allow for transfer of skills learned in correctional programs, teach women offenders healthy ways of living, and introduce them to increased pro-social choices. Even though they do not directly target wellness or criminal behaviour, social programs, as activities supportive of correctional and mental health programs, play an essential role in CSC's efforts to actively encourage offenders to become law-abiding citizens. ■

¹ 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, ON K1A 0P9

² Andrews, D. A. (2000). Principles of Effective Correctional Programs. *Compendium 2000 on Effective Correctional Programming*, (p. 9-18). Also see Blanchette, K. (2000). Effective Correctional Practice with Women Offenders. *Compendium 2000 on Effective Correctional Programming*, (p. 160-173).

³ Program Advisory Committee, Grand Valley Institution. (2003). Comments on the Correctional Programs Strategy for Women. *Personal Communication dated February 11, 2004*.

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⁵ Bloom, B., Owen, B. & Covington, S. (2003). *Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders: Gender Responsive Strategies*. US Department of Justice. National Institute of Corrections. See also Pollock, J. M. (1999). *Criminal Woman*. Anderson Publication. Cincinnati, OH. See also Spain, A. & Hamel, S. (1996). Perspective Relationelle du Développement Féminin. *Canadian Journal of Counselling/Revue Canadienne de Counselling*, 30, 5-15.

⁶ Andrews, D.A., Dowden, C., & Gendreau, P. (1999). *Clinically Relevant and Psychologically Informed Approaches to Reduced Reoffending: A Meta-analytic Study of Human Service, Risk, Need, Responsibility and Other Concerns in Justice Context*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

⁷ Covington, S. (2001). Creating Gender Specific Programs. *Corrections Today*, (p. 85-89).

⁸ Op.Cit., Bloom, B., Owen, B. & Covington, S. (2003).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Op.Cit. Blanchette, K. (2000). pp. 160-173. See also McLachlan, Y. (2000). *Add Woman and Stir*. M.Sc. Dissertations submitted to the University of Stirling and the University of Edinburg, UK.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

A gender-specific substance abuse program for federally-sentenced women

Lucy Hume¹

Addictions Research Centre, Correctional Service of Canada

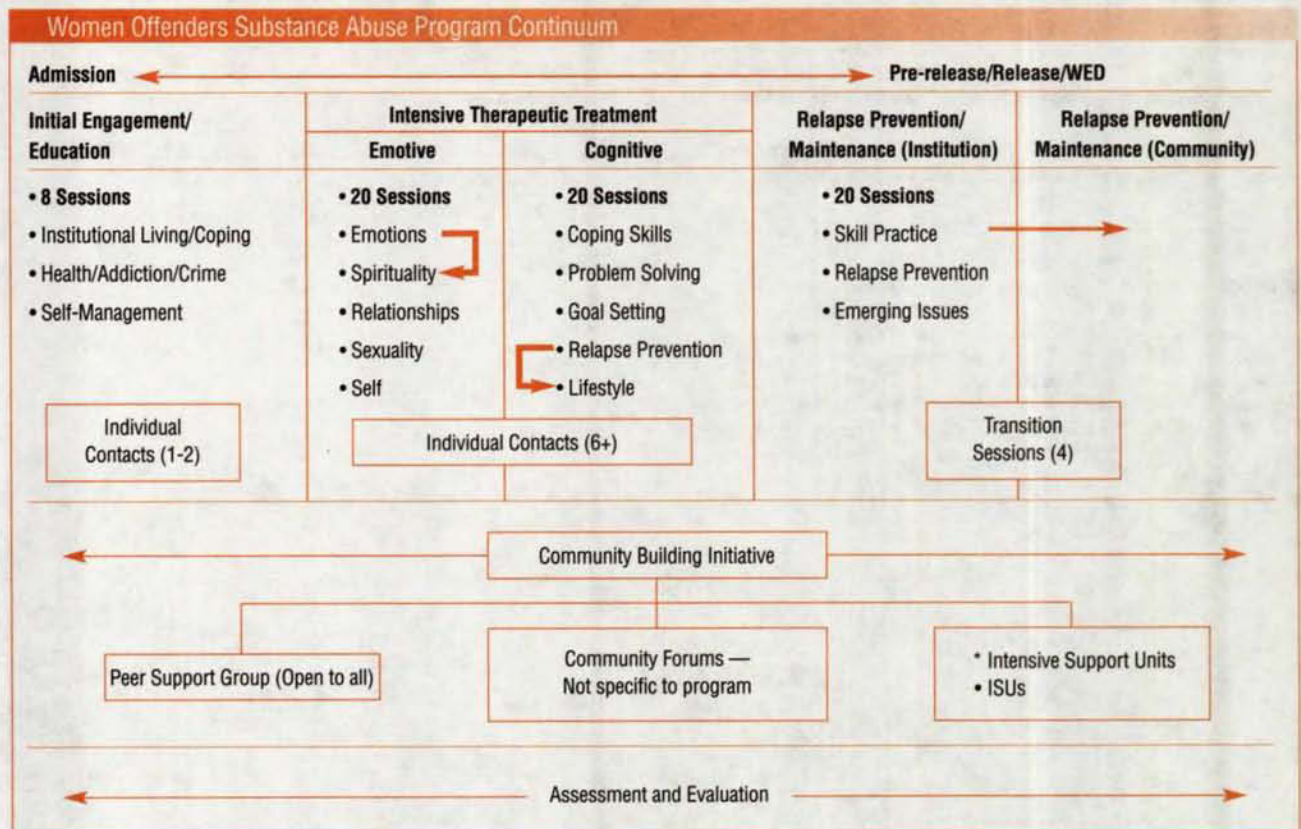
Substance abuse is a significant concern for women offenders. Estimates are as high as 80% with some groups reaching 80-90%. Women offenders who abuse substances have significantly more problems and are more likely to re-offend. For programming to be effective, it must recognize and respond to their unique needs and experiences. Correctional Services Canada (CSC) has responded with a comprehensive gender-based model — a systemic approach grounded in 'connection' and 'community'. A national pilot is currently underway.

A little more than three years ago, CSC asked a panel of internationally recognized experts² to make recommendations regarding substance abuse treatment for women offenders. Experts agreed that a comprehensive gender-based design was needed, one that is multi-dimensional, incorporating both the intervention and the environment. Relational theory is fundamental to this approach and should be reflected in all aspects of programming. CSC accepted the panel's recommendations and the

challenge to create a new program model began. Several members of the original panel have continued to work with CSC in an advisory capacity as this project unfolds.

The result is a design capable of responding to a wide range of complex needs. It is gender responsive in all respects (content, staffing and culture). Gender responsive, in this context, refers to an environment that reflects a comprehensive understanding of the realities of women's lives. The institutional milieu is used to reinforce program goals and offer opportunities to add an experiential dimension to treatment where learning and living are integrated. From admission to warrant expiry, this model offers a virtually seamless continuum of matched interventions geared to empowering women to make healthy lifestyle choices.

The following outline briefly describes the program continuum, content, and the relationship between the components of this integrated and systemic response:



Initial Engagement and Education: Connecting with women in within the first day or two of admission can dramatically affect how a woman feels about her environment. This initial contact is an important opportunity to offer support and motivation. While building motivation is always important, it is particularly so in the early days of incarceration. In this Module, the use of drugs and alcohol is addressed broadly and include reference to important health issues such as infectious disease and FAS/D. Because most women offenders are affected directly or indirectly by substance use, whether through a partner, a parent, or a child, this Module is offered to all women in the institution. At minimum, they will be living with many women who do have an addiction.

Intensive Therapeutic Treatment: Offered to women with a moderate to high substance abuse need, this module, which is co-facilitated, integrates those areas that are based in the personal/emotional domain with cognitive-behavioural learning. Rather than treating these needs as independent, the program is designed to weave the two together. Emotions, Spirituality, Relationships, Sexuality and Self are explored in tandem with skill acquisition, changing attitudes, problem solving and preventing relapse. In this way, programming treats substance abuse within a holistic frame of reference.

Relapse Prevention/Maintenance: Similar to Engagement and Education, this module is geared to the needs of all women offenders and builds on the assumption that the principles of behaviour change and maintenance of change are consistent across behaviours and is, therefore generic in content. Relapse prevention and self-regulation strategies are used to enhance strengths, solidify coping strategies and increase self-awareness. With continuous entry, women can begin this module in the institution and complete it in the community. It also functions as an alternative to suspension or revocation for those women who relapse while in the community.

Peer Support and Community Forums: These are less formal and are intended to offer continuous support in an environment where women can explore and access resources outside of the formal program agenda. Based on self-help models, these activities promote mutual support and opportunities to recognize and celebrate achievements. Peer support and community forums are an extension of the broader interest in community building as a means to create or strengthen positive community culture.

CSC contracted with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health to develop an extensive state-of-the-art program curriculum that is firmly rooted in gender-based principles and recognized best practices in the treatment of addiction. An Implementation Committee was also established with representation from all regions sectors in CSC. This working group has also been instrumental in the preparation of demonstration sites, including the development of operational guidelines and the identification of related resource needs.

All five regional facilities for women offenders agreed to pilot WOSAP. In May of 2003, 12 skilled and enthusiastic program delivery officers were trained and programming implementation began a few weeks later. In September of 2003, 12 community sites were identified and training was again provided to program facilitators who would then deliver Relapse Prevention/Maintenance in the community.

The first year of a two year pilot is near completion and, while there have been a few hiccups, the unique aspects of WOSAP are rapidly becoming part of the program landscape and the response is promising. From June to December 31, 2003, 26 cycles of Engagement & Education and 5 cycles of Intensive Treatment were delivered. In most sites, Maintenance was just beginning. While it is too early to comment on outcome, preliminary indications suggest that program goals targeted are being met. Program satisfaction ratings are very high and facilitators' logs suggest that program content is both challenging and effective. Program completion rates are also a positive sign with the average rate for Education at 93% and 82% for Intensive Treatment (women who do not complete are typically paroled prior to cycle completion). A second round of training was held in May/June, 2004, ensuring that sites are equipped to provide continuous programming. A comprehensive evaluation is planned at the completion of the demonstration period. Considerable interest has been expressed in WOSAP by other jurisdictions, both provincially and internationally. In the interim, the work continues. ■

¹ 23 Brook Street, Montague, PEI C0A 1R0

² Panel of experts — Dr. Stephanie Covington, La Jolla, California, U.S.A., Dr. George Parks, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A., and Dr. Virginia Carver, Ottawa, ON Canada.

The use of stories for healing interventions with women

Jasmine Rowan, Sherry Auger, Honi Toto, Shannon Simpson, and Clare McNab¹
Correctional Service of Canada

For centuries, Aboriginal² people have utilized stories as an integral part of their oral tradition. This has preserved history, with stories about past events and the reaction of a community or individual. Stories are also effective in teaching about life, in passing down values and culture throughout the generations.

Stories continue to be utilized in the present day. At the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, stories are told on a regular basis. These stories might be legends from long ago; they might be personal stories about one's life history. They might also be contemporary stories or recent events that are shared. Elders, staff, and/or the residents (inmates) might tell these stories, to help one another in daily life.

Background

Story telling incorporates the value of respect, which is fundamental to Aboriginal society. Some of the stories have a moral (which is shared at the end of the telling), but most often, an individual is told a story and left to determine the meaning or the moral of the story for themselves. This is considered respectful, as stories can contain many elements that will spark an individual's attention, depending upon their place in the Circle of Life³. Patricia Montour-Angus writes in *Thunder in my Soul*, "The tradition of oral history as a method of sharing the lessons of life with children and young people also had the advantage that the Elders told us the stories. They did not tell us what to do or how to do it or figure out the world for us — they told us a story about their experience, about their life or their grandfather's or grandmother's or auntie's or uncle's life. It is in this manner that Indian people are taught independence as well as respect because you have to do your own figuring for yourself. (p.11)".⁴

Terry Tafoya in *Finding Harmony: Balancing Traditional Values with Western Science in Therapy* writes, "I want to emphasize the importance of stories and how we make sense of things. Part of finding a harmony is recognizing that we all have a lot of stories to tell, and the value we find in Native stories needs to be recognized in the same way that we recognize and show respect to other stories... Listen, stories go in circles, because they are stories inside and between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your

way home. Part of finding is getting lost, and when you're lost you start to open up and listen (p. 11)."⁵

Stories

Stories can also be utilized in professional practice, as outlined in *Handbook on Using Stories in Health Promotion Practice*, "Stories have played a long and important role in our histories. All cultures have story-telling traditions. Before writing, stories were the living libraries of knowledge and the basis of learning... The [A]boriginal tradition of the story-telling circle, where each person speaks in turn without interruption, is increasingly used in community meetings and professional gatherings. Its power lies in people speaking from the heart of their experiences, without the threat of interruption or disagreeing challenge⁶."

The foundation of the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge is 'healing'. *Creating Choices*, April 1990, stressed the need to respond in a culturally appropriate way to the needs of incarcerated Aboriginal women. The vision of the Lodge describes the healing process as:

- a) Self-knowledge; to acquire through awareness of self and of the issues that have affected one's life in order to start the journey towards healing.
- b) Equality to acquire the knowledge and ability to empower oneself so that one can deal with the work from a position equally.
- c) Aboriginal Spirituality and Traditions to acquire and/or deepen knowledge and understanding on one's role as women, mothers, and community members through Aboriginal Teachings, Traditions and Spirituality.

A selection of stories is shared here, with some interpretation by residents in a sharing circle at the Lodge. The Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge is located on the Nekaneet First Nation. The following is an excerpt of a traditional story as related in the Nekaneet First Nation Vision and Philosophy for the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge (unpublished, p 3-4):

The making of the land goes back to when there was no land or animals. There was a flood that last 40 days and 40 nights. Wesakechak⁷ and the animals went through a great flood. They made a raft that would carry the animals. From the raft,

the muskrat was the only animal that could swim down through the water to the bottom and get some dirt. Wesakechak took that dirt from the muskrat and stood on top of the Okimaw Ohci Hills. He blew the dirt from his hand and created land. After some time, he asked the coyote to go see how much land was there. Always the coyote came back, saying there wasn't enough. Then one young coyote, a yearling pup, went and didn't come back for a long time. When he returned, he was old and said there was enough land. That is why this is a special place, a very special place.

Sherry spoke, "This version of Creation makes more sense to me than the Bible story." Shannon followed up, "This story uses elements of Mother Earth, Wesakechak took a lowly muskrat. I understood that the animals, in their wisdom, their strengths and weaknesses, helped to create this earth." Jasmine talked from a different viewpoint, "I heard of this Wesakechak when I was young. He didn't only create this place; he was at my reserve too. He gave the land to our people and created the animals. The first time I heard about Wesakechak, I was in Grade 2. He created this land for his people and sacrificed a lot. This story makes me feel good, proud that I'm Native, because we're powerful people. This also makes me want to go more into our spirituality and look up our people, because there's not too much written. It hurts because it's been taken from us; we owned it all and just got a little bit. We're in the governments hands now; we go by their rules." Terry Tafoya writes, "When you are growing up you may hear a story over and over again throughout your lifetime, but as you acquire different experiences, your understanding of what that story is about will alter, even though the story doesn't change. (p. 20)"

Sherry compared the story to her own circumstances, "The great flood is like going through tough times, hitting a bump in the road. Making a raft to carry the animals is like making a raft to carry yourself through rough times. The coyote came back, never gave up, no matter how tough times get; there's always hope. That young pup went through a lot, overcame obstacles in life. No matter how much you struggle, never give up; it will get better."

Jasmine, a 20 year old Aboriginal woman, first offence, serving 6 years for manslaughter, shared her life story. "Alcohol became my best friend, because it took the pain away and made me forget about the past and what had happened. I did a lot when I was drunk because I didn't care what happened to me or to others around me. By the time I was 16; I became violent and started to fight with anyone who got in my way. At the age of 13, I started to slash up to try and get rid of the pain on the inside, but it always came back, so I did more of the slashing. I wasn't

having fun, I was only hurting myself, and keeping myself from coming out of my deep depression, trying to cover up the pain I had inside. I closed myself from the world outside, and lived in my own world. At the same time, none of what happened is your fault. There are people out here who do love and care about you; it's just that everyone has a totally different perspective of showing their love."

Sherry acknowledges Jasmine's story, "It's similar to why I drank, to get attention. I was a people person, I needed the attention. It's good to tell these stories to other people, so they can see through different eyes, so they can see the direction they are heading." Honi has a different view, "I can't relate to that story. I grew up in a good home. When I turned 10, I was sexually abused. One day, my abuser took me outside, and shot himself in front of me. I didn't want to tell anyone. I started drinking when I turned 20, I didn't know how to deal with issues. Alcohol and drugs were our coping strategy. When I lost my sister, I started doing drugs. I grew up with spirituality, but when my sister passed away, I lost everything after that."

Shannon (37 years old, Caucasian, serving 3 years for fraud) also reflected on Jasmine's story, sharing the circumstances surrounding her crime, "I grew up in a dry household. I wasn't sexually abused until I was 21. I was raped, I was a virgin, and I got pregnant from that rape. I couldn't tell my parents, because our house was so strict. My husband was so abusive. I was raped again by 2 men where I worked. I blamed myself. The anger, resentment welled up. I never resorted to drugs and alcohol. I funneled the money and got a high, exhilarating, my way of getting back at them.

Sherry, a 22-year-old Aboriginal woman, first offence, serving 28 months for drug trafficking also shared her personal life story. "I had a good life with my family, until my parents started to drink and go to bars. I was only 7 years old when I first got abandoned. I had no idea how to take care of myself, while my parents were out getting drunk and fighting. Child Welfare stepped into my life, I didn't know where I was going, all I knew was it was some place safe. Well, at least that's what I thought. In that foster home, I was abused, sexually. I was scared, but I had nowhere to run. As I got older, I found a way to take my pain away. I started to drink at the age of 12. Then, when my daughter was 9 months, I left her with the wrong babysitter. She ended up in a foster home just like me. I then went into a deep depression and I didn't know what to do."

The sharing circle following Sherry's story was insightful. Shannon said, "It's almost like we're on autopilot, when you come to a point and say, 'Oh my, how did I get to this place?'" Honi shared, "its like when we were all drug addicts, nothing stood in our way." Jasmine reflected on her own

story, "At that time, we were really depressed, deep depression, our survival of coping with past issues. All the stuff we did was to get drugs and alcohol. For me, when I was depressed, I'd isolate myself, stayed in my room and didn't talk to anyone. Honi went further, "We were like zombies out there, we didn't know what reality was, until you were sober for a few days." Jasmine continued with similar thoughts, "The reason I never cried when I was out there, was I thought it was a weakness. Now, I know its part of our spirituality, our emotions are a part of us."

Terry Tafoya writes, "It is a question of telling many different stories because — as human beings, as communities — we need as many stories as possible; as many perspectives because that is what finding harmony is about (p. 24)." One can see from the various words and emotions how stories can be shared, and how this brings understanding and harmony between people. Sharing of life stories allows for compassion from one another and a common bond, similar life experiences (although different as described above) brings new respect and caring for one another.

A final story is shared, from Margaret Cote-Lerat (a Saulteaux woman from Saskatchewan). The story is written in English, Saulteaux and Saulteaux syllabics.

A Humorous Story in Plains Ojibway (Saulteaux)

"Apparently, a long time ago, when the earth was new, all the animals were capable of speaking. So one time, all the dogs decided to have a big conference. These dogs had their meeting in a big building. As they entered the building, they all took their tails off, and hung them by the door".

"So, now, they were really enjoying themselves, when suddenly, the building caught on fire. Now these dogs were running every which way, and as they were running out, in the excitement, they all grabbed any old tail. Now that they were outside, they put on their tails. "Oh my", says one of the dogs, "This is not my tail!" All the dogs looked at their tails and began smelling each other's tails trying to find their own. It is still so today, this is what dogs do, they still smell each other's tails, trying to find their own". The End.⁸

This story brought lots of laughter to the group. Shannon said, "I have to tell my husband. We have 2 biscion-shitsu dogs, and they are always doing that to each other. Sherry said, "It's a funny story with a practical message. It also made me think about taking a second look at yourself, are you sure that belongs to you?"

This led to a discussion about looks and beauty. Sherry said, "Some dogs have ugly tails, and some have big beautiful bushy tails." Jasmine asked, "Is that from the inside or the outside?" Shannon said, "Some people are really beautiful, but when people look at them, they can see the ugliness inside."

Honi completed the session by taking a different view, "When dogs are running around on the reserve, maybe they can talk to one another, maybe they are talking together? They might be talking about which is the best house, who has the best food!" This is an interesting comparison, thinking of dogs communicating and what they would say from a dog's perspective. Terry Tafoya also writes about this, "One reason that we tell our stories is to try to see through a different kind of eyes (p. 23)."

The residents had a final message of hope, within their stories of hopelessness and loss of faith. Shannon said, "Different Elders hold your attention. You don't want to leave when they are talking. You want to stay and soak up the atmosphere. I'm so much more open and receptive." Honi spoke, "They speak from the heart, with lots of love." Jasmine said, "Elders and healers help us realize what we need to do for ourselves. We are realizing that there's a lot 'out there' for us. They made me realize there's nothing that I can't do. I know where I stand in life, and I know what I have to do. It will get done."

"This wisdom comes from the hard-won experiences of the countless generations of people who have gone before us. It is taught through the songs, dances, stories, prayers and ceremonies of our people. This wisdom gives us nourishment to develop our full potential "The Sacred Tree" (p. 24).⁹ ■

¹ Clare McNab is the Kikawinaw (Director) of the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, C.P. 1929, Maple Creek, SK S0N 1N0. Jasmine, Sherry, Honi and Shannon were residents (inmates) at the Lodge.

² The term Aboriginal refers to both First Nations and Metis people. Other terms are also utilized in this paper, including Native, and Indian.

³ The Circle of Life is the teaching that life is a circle with many components, most often represented in groups of four. Examples include: a) the four aspects of an individual include the physical, mental, emotional, and the spiritual; b) the four hills of life include infancy, childhood, adulthood, and old age; c) the four circles include the individual, family, nation, and the world; d) the four spiritual principles of Love, Honesty, Unselfishness and Purity. A person may be at any stage on the Circle of Life regardless of their age.

⁴ Montour-Angus, Patricia. *Thunder in My Soul*.

⁵ Tafoya, Terry. (1995). Finding Harmony: Balancing Traditional Values with Western Science in Therapy. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 21.

⁶ Labonte, Ronald & Feather, J. (1996). *Prairie Region Health Promotion Research Centre*, University of Saskatchewan. Handbook on Using Stories in Health Promotion Practice. Health Canada.

⁷ Authors note: Wesakechak (Way sa kay chuk) is a Cree word, and is the name of the first 'man' on earth. He could talk with animals and do miraculous things. He is sometimes called the 'trickster', and is found in other Aboriginal cultures/legends as well.

⁸ Cote-Lerat, Margaret. (1989). *A Humorous Story in Plains Ojibway (Saulteaux)*. Regina, SK. (Unpublished)

⁹ *The Sacred Tree*. (1988, April). Four Worlds International Institute, Lethbridge, AB.

Incarcerated mothers and their children: A complex issue

Brigitte Blanchard¹

Programs Sector, Correctional Service of Canada

Over the past few decades, work has been underway at the Correctional Service of Canada to expand the scope of corrections in order to meet the family needs of incarcerated individuals. In August 1998, the move to allow mothers to live with their children in new regional women's institutions was the culminating point of practices fostering family contact in a prison environment. Although the presence of children in prison may surprise us and raise many concerns about the child's interests, this is a well-established practice in a number of European countries and American states.

Background

Few studies have dealt directly with this clientele in a Canadian context. To correct this, we conducted a field survey in 1999-2000 in Quebec's main (provincial and federal) women's correctional institutions and community residential centres². By combining various methodologies (questionnaire, interviews and participant observation), we examined the relationships between mothers and their children during incarceration, basing our conclusions on comments made by 99 mothers regarding 203 of their children. This data was supplemented by the stories of a small number of children and various professionals involved with this clientele. In this article, we will be summarizing the key points of our research, which sought, first and foremost, to portray the situation of incarcerated mothers and their children in Quebec.

Profile of incarcerated mothers

In analyzing our data, we were able to identify some characteristics. Our first observation was that incarcerated mothers share many characteristics with female inmates as a whole, whether in Quebec, Canada or the United States. Based on the results of our survey, a high percentage of our respondents were women aged 31 to 40. On average, these women, many of whom had their first child when they were under 21, gave birth to a little over two children. Often single, over half of our respondents had to take care of their children alone at some point in their life.

Our data further indicates that most of these women are from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. At the time of arrest, approximately two out of three did not have a high school education or job, and

many were receiving social assistance. Their monthly income averages close to \$700, for an annual household income (including all sources of income) of under \$20,000. Our data also indicates that a number of these women had been victims of sexual abuse. Many of them came from families that had conflicts with the law.

Addiction often plays a part in these personal and family problems. Nearly two thirds of the mothers we questioned stated their incarceration is in some way linked to substance abuse, with alcohol and cocaine as the most commonly used substances. This data, combined with our findings and interviews with various individuals, leads us to believe that mothers who have a tendency to abuse drugs often have a history of instability in their life, factors that may affect the type of relationship they have with their children. It also appears that a number of these women resorted to criminal activities to support their addiction.

Consequences of incarceration

Our results indicate quite clearly that the situation these women and their children face is a rather complex issue that involves a variety of players and has an impact on personal, family and organizational aspects.

For children, being separated from their mother, whether for the first time or not, often leaves them scarred even after the sentence. Children's personal characteristics, degree of family support and relationship with their mother are factors that may affect the way they experience separation. Of course, these children first have to deal with the physical and psychological absence of their mother. Even though incarceration sometimes involves difficulties and difficult relationships, adapting to this type of reality is not necessarily self-evident. Moreover, our respondents say that, after they were incarcerated, more than two thirds of their children had behavioural, school or emotional problems. Most of the children we questioned said they had experienced these problems. They also told us about their emotional distress due to worry, solitude and social isolation, which they had to confront almost daily. In short, for them, nothing can replace a mother's affection and presence.

A number of our respondents told us how difficult it is for them to live apart from their children. They are overcome with worry, sadness, guilt and powerlessness. While guilt is clearly present, we note that it can sometimes lead them to neglect their parental responsibilities or quite the opposite, make them want to make amends.

Incarceration and family reality

Apart from the bond that exists between a mother and her child, and upon which personal and family factors have a great influence, we note that incarceration creates obstacles that make strengthening a mother-child relationship in a prison environment difficult. Contact difficulties due to estrangement, prison policies restricting visits and communication, security constraints, lack of specialized personnel and inadequate care for pregnant women, among other things, appear to be structural constraints weighing on the maternal relationship. Moreover, our results show that the institutional services mothers use most often to keep in contact with their children during their sentence are limited to phone conversations (43%) and writing letters (25%). Long-distance charges are one of the most frequently identified obstacles to maintaining mother-child contact.

It is surprising to see that prison visiting programs (regular visits, mother-child visits or trailer visits) represent only one quarter of the services used by these mothers. A number of mothers told us how discouraging the rigidity of certain rules and operating procedures were, since they do not take into account their family reality (visiting hours during school hours, non-contact visits, etc.). In addition, the inappropriateness of visiting sites for children's needs in some institutions is criticized, as are problems with transportation.

It should be noted that close to 15% of children do not have any contact with their mother during incarceration. In fact, some mothers prefer not to have contact with their children or receive visits while in prison because they want to protect their

children from the damaging effects of incarceration. We should also keep in mind that the relationships mothers can have with their children while in prison are often limited by the various players involved. Prison authorities and sometimes even workers from the *Direction de la protection de la Jeunesse (DPJ)* are called on to determine the benefits of mother-child visits on the basis of notions that are often very vague, given the lack of specific policies.

Conclusion

Our results clearly indicate that the situation these women and their children face is not that simple and presents a complex problem. It is one thing to provide an appropriate environment for children of incarcerated women, but quite another to foster their relationship, rebuild it and meet their multiple needs. This is where we believe the greatest challenge lies for correctional services and other departments. It would be to the advantage of the various departments to work together and opt for a reform that takes into account the complex, but vital, relationship between the family, offender and correctional process.

Perhaps we should take inspiration from foreign practices, such as those of the *Association Relais Enfants-Parents*, which is active in French and Belgian prisons. This association consists of a network of professionals and volunteers who provide various services to establish quality relationships between incarcerated parents, children and their foster families. To achieve this, an organizational structure would have to be put in place, allowing for the centralization of the workforce and resources involved with the families, to ensure the development of a strategy on joint actions and policies that would look after the best interests of the children, mothers and society in general. ■

¹ 801 Sherbrooke East, Montreal, QC H2L 1K7

² Blanchard (2002), "Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children in Quebec."

An integrated and woman-centered approach to treating Borderline Personality Disorder

Jennifer A. Boisvert¹

Edmonton Institution for Women, Correctional Service of Canada

Correctional psychologists treating women offenders diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) in institutional settings are faced with the challenge of doing so in a way that is sensitive and responsive to offender characteristics and needs yet is effective and comprehensive in addressing the range of BPD features and co-morbid diagnoses. The gendered and multifaceted nature of BPD warrants consideration of a brief therapeutic approach that is integrated and woman-centered. This article presents a case example to illustrate how the use of such an approach in the context of brief individual therapy may effectively and holistically address BPD features, co-morbid diagnoses, and cultural issues in women offenders. Conclusions and future directions concerning the use of this treatment approach are highlighted.

Introduction

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders² defines BPD as a pervasive pattern of instability in one's relationships, self-image, emotions, and impulses that disrupts daily functioning. The gendered nature of this disorder is obvious; it is predominantly women (approximately 75%) whom are diagnosed with BPD. Some defining features of BPD are as follows: (a) real or imagined abandonment by others; (b) intense relationships marked by idealization and devaluation; (c) impulsivity expressed as substance abuse; (d) suicidal thoughts or behaviours; and (e) outbursts of anger. BPD is often co-morbid with psychological diagnoses of post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, and substance dependence disorder.

Treatment issues

Variability in treatment outcome may occur due to specific factors such as matching style and mode of therapy to reflect offender personality and learning style (e.g., responsivity) and the intensity of intervention to the risk level of the offender. Correctional psychologists treating women offenders with BPD especially need to consider how to provide psychological service in a way that balances institutional resources and matches offenders' personal, psychological, and correctional needs. Guiding principles and characteristics of what constitutes "good correctional intervention" with

women offenders include the following: cognitive-behavioural focus; self-empowerment and connectionist emphasis; multifaceted interventions with theoretical underpinnings; criteria for selection of specific therapeutic strategies; gender-responsiveness and cultural awareness.³

An Integrated and Woman-Centered Approach to Intervention

Although Correctional literature on women offenders has featured articles on innovative treatment programs that tap BPD features, there is little available literature featuring interventions that target BPD features and co-morbid diagnoses. This suggests a gap in the literature. Accordingly, this article presents an integrated and woman-centered approach to intervention as a way of achieving goodness-of-fit in terms of tailoring specific treatments to women offenders' personal characteristics, special needs, and cultural issues in order to enhance treatment effectiveness. This article by no means offers a comprehensive review of BPD treatment. Rather, it focuses only on an integrated and woman-centered intervention comprised of Dialectical-Behaviour Therapy (DBT) as a primary approach and therapeutic letter-writing (TLR) (i.e., client letter-writing between sessions) as an adjunct strategy in the context of brief individual therapy.

DBT is a broad-based cognitive-behavioural therapy developed specifically for BPD, a core component of which is psychosocial skills training.⁴ Psychosocial skills training enhances client interpersonal and emotional functioning. Some skills include: 1) Core mindfulness — balancing clients' logical and emotional thoughts by objectively observing situations, focusing on the moment, and being effective, 2) Interpersonal effectiveness — challenging clients' negative expectancies regarding their relationships and themselves by asking for what one needs, saying no, and coping with interpersonal conflict, 3) Emotional regulation — encouraging clients how to identify and appropriately express emotions, decrease emotional stressors, and increase positive emotions, and 4) Distress tolerance — teaching clients to tolerate and survive crises by distracting and self-soothing, pro/con thinking, and altering situations.

Letter-Writing strategy

Therapeutic Letter-Writing (TLR) is a strategy grounded in both narrative and feminist therapy approaches. Narrative therapy proposes that clients “write their own story” based upon their own perceptions and suggests that TLR facilitates client change in the process of exploring experiences, expressing emotions, and increasing self-awareness.⁵ Feminist therapy suggests that TLR can be a powerful therapeutic tool in helping women who are sexual abuse survivors explore their experiences and express their emotions safely, develop self-esteem and self-empathy, and empower a sense of self-sufficiency.⁶ TLR may empower a client by helping her break the silence she experiences as a consequence of harboring secrets of abuse or neglect. TLR may help a client discover her “voice” and provide for her an opportunity to engage in reflection before communicating with other family members who neglected or abused her or with whom she is experiencing interpersonal conflict. Although group and process based writing has typically been used in women’s correctional institutions and shown to be effective in enhancing personal growth and healing, there is evidence suggesting that TLR can be equally effective when used in individual therapy.⁷

The following case example is typical of what correctional psychologists may encounter in a women’s correctional institutional setting. The case example is based on an actual therapeutic encounter with a woman offender diagnosed with BPD. The intervention used is an integrated and woman-centered approach in the context of brief individual therapy. DBT was the front-line treatment and TLR was introduced from a feminist perspective as an adjunct.

A Case Example Illustration

“Niaomie” (a pseudonym) was an 18-year-old Aboriginal woman offender charged once again with drug trafficking. She was incarcerated in a correctional institution in Western Canada. Shortly after being incarcerated she was referred to counseling for depression and suicidal ideation concerns. At intake she reported a history of child sexual abuse by her stepfather. She attributed her personal problems to mother-daughter conflicts, drug and alcohol addictions, and prior offences. Niaomie reported that her mother had “abandoned” and neglected her in childhood and adolescence. She stated that she felt alienated from her mother because her mother did not stop the sexual abuse and blamed her for the abuse. Niaomie stated that she abused drugs and alcohol to cope with the sexual abuse and the

non-support from her mother. Niaomie was diagnosed with BPD and displayed notable features such as abandonment beliefs, idealization and devaluation of others (mother), impulsive substance abuse, and explosive anger.

A primary treatment goal for Niaomie was to improve communications with her mother specifically and to increase her sense of social support generally. Within the framework of DBT, Niaomie worked on: social skills building specific to her relationship with her mother, enhancing her ability to develop a support system, and attempting to be self-supporting. Core schemas linked to depression and suicidal ideation were identified, explored, and challenged in reference to her past abusive experience, present relationship with her mother, and future goals to stop the “vicious cycle” of her addictions and offending behaviours. Niaomie came to see connections between mother-daughter conflicts, depressive symptoms, and impulsive/self-destructive behaviours. Core beliefs of personal worthlessness and social ineffectiveness were addressed.

TLR was introduced from a feminist perspective to help Niaomie seek self-connection and connection with her mother. Letter-writing to herself after therapy sessions acted as a “snapshot” and captured Niaomie’s own thoughts and ideas that were clear to her during the session. She was encouraged to refer back to this information to help her counter her “black-and-white” thinking and negative emoting. Writing letters (but not sent) to her mother helped Niaomie explore feelings of anger and betrayal related to her experiences of abuse and abandonment. For Niaomie, TLR became a starting point for further discussion and conflict resolution with her mother. Through the letter-writing process, Niaomie discovered her “voice” and in doing so developed empathy for herself and for her mother. She gained a new perspective (i.e., reframing) of her abuse and abandonment experiences and came to see that she could receive caring and support from the person (mother) by whom she had felt most betrayed. Given Niaomie’s Aboriginal heritage of story-telling, she was encouraged to consider the benefits of “telling her story” in another way that was emotionally safe for her such as circle sharing.

A secondary treatment goal was to help Niaomie stop the cycle of her addictions and offending behaviours. Within the DBT framework, Niaomie learned more about the potential effects of her drug and alcohol abuse on her body, mind, and spirit. The latter was of particular interest to her given her Aboriginal heritage. She learned stress, anger, and crisis management strategies to help her to consider healthier ways of coping with stress and anger and

to develop distress tolerance. Consequential thinking exercises helped her to realize that her addictions drove her criminal behaviours. She could see more clearly how her feelings of pain and anger acted as precursors to drug and alcohol abuse and subsequent criminality.

Niaomie reported improved communications with her mother attributed psychosocial skills building and letter-writing. Niaomie credited the DBT approach generally and the feminist-focused TLR strategy specifically in helping her develop the skills needed to resolve conflicts with her mother and to develop skills to make her life better. She reported improved mood, confidence in managing her emotions, and awareness of risk factors for future substance abuse and re-offence. It was her intent to continue applying what she learned in therapy in working towards better life quality.

Conclusion

As illustrated in this article, correctional psychologists treating women offenders with BPD may consider the resourcefulness and effectiveness of using an integrated and woman-centered approach to intervention as a means of balancing institutional resources and matching offenders' personal, psychological, and correctional needs. An advantage of this approach is its comprehensiveness in addressing the multifaceted and gendered nature of BPD. A related advantage is its flexibility in terms of treating co-morbid diagnoses and touching on cultural awareness. A future direction for practice and research is to establish the effectiveness of integrated and/or woman-centered treatment approaches while taking into account special needs and social/cultural issues of women offenders with BPD or other personality disorders.⁸ ■

¹ 11151-178th Street, Edmonton, AB T5S 2H9; Department of Psychology, University of Regina, Regina, SK S4S 0A2.

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Utilizing a strengths perspective in parole supervision with women

Rebecca Deguara¹
Correctional Service of Canada

In my work as a Parole Officer with the Women's Supervision Unit in Toronto, I found that it was often easy to become focused solely on the "problems" presented by my assigned cases. This made sense since women parolees are usually assessed as having multiple "needs". Over time these labels have the potential to alter how an individual will see themselves. For many women who have come through the child protection and juvenile justice systems prior to adult corrections, they have become accustomed to seeing themselves as having numerous faults that need to be "fixed". Over the years I found this approach to be extremely negative and it frequently led me to have pessimistic expectations of the parolees. As a result I began to search for a different approach to my parole supervision.

Background

Somewhere along the way I was introduced to an alternative approach — the idea of building on a client's strengths. In corrections work it is easy to ignore the fact that every individual also possesses some strengths, no matter how tenuous. By incorporating a strengths perspective you can actually build on the positives the women already possess. Given that many of the women I supervise come from a context of abuse whether it be sexual, emotional, physical and/or societal, each woman needs to be viewed from that frame of reference. Most of the women are so used to talking about their problems that when you first ask them to speak about their strengths they are somewhat taken aback. In order to utilize this perspective it is necessary to suspend the belief that the woman may never "amount to anything". This means that you have to assume that the women know something and have learned from their life experiences. The parolee also needs to believe that you respect them and think that they can build something out of their lives.

Method

In order to discover the strengths the woman possesses the following types of interview questions have been recommended. "Survival questions — eg. Given what you have gone through in your life, how have you managed to survive so far? Support questions — eg. What people have given you special

understanding, support, guidance? Possibility questions — eg. What are your hopes, visions, aspirations? Esteem questions — eg. When people say good things about you, what are they likely to say? Exception questions — eg. When things were going well in your life what was different?"² For instance, while working with a woman with a substance abuse history, I can find strength in speaking with her about the exceptions to the times when she was abusing drugs. In other words to seek out those times in her life when she did not use and how she did that.

Fortunately, I have found this approach to be refreshingly positive and that it often opens the door to new possibilities. Granted I do not use this perspective in isolation, as I combine it with a women centered model, while incorporating brief solution-focused interventions, and relapse prevention techniques, amongst others.

Regardless, when utilizing a strengths perspective, out of the parolee's pain and suffering comes hope that they can begin to change and plan for brighter futures. This does not mean that I negate the contributing factors that led to the offence(s) nor excuse any of the negative behaviours in which the women have engaged. Rather I have consciously tried to draw out what makes each woman a unique individual by utilizing strength-based interviewing questions in a collaborative process. This seems to allow the women to discover their own strengths, and empowers them to make more of their own choices.

I view many of these women to be extremely resilient. Many are actually survivors, who have overcome major life obstacles in order to stand where they are today. Although they have committed a criminal offence enroute, they still have a legitimate voice. A strengths perspective allows me to help them find that voice and in the process seems to lower the risk of re-offending. Other Parole Officers may find strength in utilizing this perspective in their own work. ■

¹ Women's Supervision Unit, 180 Dundas St. W., Ste. 210, Toronto, ON M5G 1ZB

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