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***“Prison Violence in Canada:
A Female Inmates’ Perspective.”***

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2000***

***Submitted to the Department of Criminology with a
specialization in Women’s Studies, University of Ottawa,
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts.***



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0-612-57100-9

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the issue of female prison violence in provincial correctional facilities in Canada. By examining this social issue through the inmate's perspective, this study attempts to identify what types of prison violence exist, explore possible explanations, examine the consequences, and formulate suggestions on how to reduce its occurrence.

In conjunction with past results on prison violence, we selected the open ended interview as the form of research methodology. Fourteen women were interviewed for the purpose of this study, and for the scope of this Master's thesis we chose to explore the issue of violence between female inmates. Therefore, collective acts of violence and violence against correctional staff at the hands of the inmates were not the focus of this study. Instead, we chose to concentrate specifically on violence exclusively experienced between the female inmates. Seven women from two different correctional facilities in two provinces participated in this study. Although several women had served both federal and provincial sentences in their appropriate facilities, only the violence witnessed or participated within provincial facilities was considered.

The study reveals that regardless of the limited amount of research, media recognition, and attention about female prison violence within provincial correctional

facilities, it does exist. It also reveals that these women qualified violence using different criteria. Consequently, what some women may consider as milder forms of violence, others interpret the same acts of violence as more serious. Despite the women's interpretation of seriousness, the interviews in this study reveal that there are daily acts of violence amongst the women, and the intensity of that experience is individually defined. This research also concludes by recommending that more research is required in this area.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis adviser, Dr. Sylvie Frigon for her direction, insight, and suggestions over the last few years.

I would also like to thank all the women who for only a brief moment allowed me to visit their world, but who have profoundly affected the rest of mine. May they triumph over all their personal battles.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to my Mother, Wilma Berwick. A long and arduous journey has proven successful, and without her support, enthusiasm, encouragement, and love, all that has been accomplished and everything that is yet to come, would not be possible. You are a wonderful Mother, and my best friend. I would also like to acknowledge my Nana, Gwendolyn Knapp, for always making me feel special.

Lastly, I would like to extend a special thank you to, Charlie Croteau, for finding me and exercising his right to demand my attention while providing me with every opportunity to escape with his distractions that allowed me to unwind and play my stress away.

INTRODUCTION

Female prison violence within Canada's provincial system is not an issue that has received a lot of attention by contemporary society and academic circles, nor viewed as a priority by the Correctional System. There has been much research about prison violence, but it has concentrated on the Federal American male populations. In Canada, a recent study concluded that violence in prisons throughout the country is "relatively high" (Cooley, 1992a: 47). In addition, Canadian contemporary researchers¹ theorize that the rates of prison violence and the victimization of inmates are higher than that revealed by the official incidents collected, recorded, and documented by Correctional staff and institutions. These reports also suggest that the existing official data greatly under estimate the actual extent of violent acts that occur within a prison. Presently, these reports indicate that the bulk of knowledge about violence in Canadian correctional facilities does not come from officially reported data, but from "victimization research in the community" (Cooley, 1992: 31).

Attempts to examine the literature addressing female inmate violence, proved that the information and statistics are scarce. Much like the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, this study supports the belief that like most statistics and official documentation concerning violence perpetrated against women, rates of female prison violence are greatly under reported. A great majority of violence against women, whether it is in society or

¹ See Shaw, 1995. ; Faith, 1993 ; Cooley, 1992 ; Porporino and Doherty, 1985.

within a correctional facility, remains unknown because women remain silenced by embarrassment, guilt, and fear. Hence, statistics on violence in women's prisons are rare, and within criminological literature so are the experiences of incarcerated women. Although female-oriented research continues to expand into new areas, there remains much to discover and learn "about our sisters behind bars", and even more about women's experiences of prison violence within Canadian jurisdictions. (Reviere and Young, 1996: 98).

To date, most official reports on woman in prison were produced in the 1990s, with numerous of them being generated by the Correctional Services of Canada's Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women. However, reports such as, Creating Choices: The Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women (1990) addressed only the issues and needs of federally sentenced women and did not discuss issues concerning the provincial population. Despite numerous studies and initiatives the issue of prison violence was never addressed. In fact, the only report that addressed prison violence within a female correctional facility was the report by the Honourable Louise Arbour, entitled, Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at The Prison for Women in Kingston. This report documented the prison events that occurred on April 26, 1994 between female inmates and correctional staff at the Federal Penitentiary for Women. It addressed this isolated incident only and did not include other incidents at a federal or provincial level, nor did it explain/discuss the issues behind violence between female inmates.

Feminist researchers that have focussed on female prison violence within a Canadian correctional facility has consisted, at most, of a section within a chapter and considered federally sentenced women. In 1990, Juristat reported that Canadian women accounted for only “eight percent” of total admissions to provincial custody, and accounted for only “three percent” of all admissions to federal custody. Although studies have shown that most women serve provincial sentences, provincially sentenced women received the least amount of scholastic, media, and government attention, funding, and support (Padel and Stevenson, 1988 ; Faith, 1993 ; Shaw, 1994). Despite their higher numbers provincially sentenced women remain the least empowered segment of the prison population and have been the most infamously forgotten population in Canada.

The numbers of women being incarcerated in Canadian correctional facilities continue to rise. It was reported that from 1978 to 1990 there was an “increase of 102 per cent” of women admitted to provincial facilities (Juristat, 1990: 118). In 1997, a total of 68,038 Canadian women were incarcerated in provincial and territorial correctional facilities (Statistics Canada, 1997). Statistics Canada’s 1999 study reported that the average female inmate in Ontario serves 92 days. These offenders would serve their sentence in a provincial institution. The same report concluded that in Quebec, female inmates serve an average of a 134 days in a provincial facility (Statistics Canada, 1999: 167). Demographics indicate that the daily population of females incarcerated in provincial institutions is lower than that of federal institutions, but the total number of people incarcerated per year is “higher ”

(Walker, *et al.*, 1996: 210). Therefore, the issue of prison violence in women's provincial institution touches a larger proportion of incarcerated women. Moreover, prison violence is an important social issue because for many incarcerated women the violence or threat of violence they have experienced throughout their lives does not cease upon entering into a correctional facility. Female inmates experience prison violence as both the aggressor and the victim. Regardless, of the women's role, being subjected to violence in its various forms influences the women's quality of life and affects the issues of personal safety. The violence women experience during incarceration can have long lasting psychological effects. We often ignore aggression among inmates because society believes that ultimately inmates deserve what they get. According to the results of this thesis the correctional facilities have failed to ensure the safety of the incarcerated population. The existence of prison violence is a personal issue that female inmates confront on a daily basis. Therefore, we must acknowledge prison violence as a social problem because we, as a society, have placed 'punished' individuals into that environment and are accountable for their protection and society's. In this thesis, we will examine the dynamics of female prison violence, acknowledge that women's subjection to violence does not end upon incarceration, and reveal that women experience violence at the hands of other women.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One, begins by providing a demographic profile of provincially sentenced women in Canada. It then explores prison violence as a contemporary issue, and expands into a more theoretical section that addresses

the issue of prison violence. Although numerous theories explain prison violence, they have “generally involved either the personal characteristics of the participants or the environment[al] ... pressures of incarceration” (Jayewardon, and Doherty, 1985: 437). This thesis will explore female prison violence from the women’s perspectives and through the two most commonly used theoretical approaches to explain prison violence. The first is the *deprivation model*. This model theorizes that prison violence is a consequence of numerous hostile inmates confined in one single physical environment who are subjected to the restrictive and repressive structures of the prison as influential to the types of interaction between inmates. The second perspective used to explain prison violence is the *importation model*. It explains prison violence as a result of many different personalities from diverse backgrounds and cultures who are unable or do not tolerate or understand each other, but who are confined to a common area. In this section, I will also qualify my hypothesis that violence in prison is primarily spontaneous and situationally induced. I also support the theory that violence is never a simple event, but is a physical response intertwined with an individual’s past and present psychological experiences and interpretations. Finally, I will establish correlations between the various forms of individual violence by conceptualizing and examining these acts within the prison environment.

In Chapter Two , I discuss the methodology used in this thesis, as well as present some of its limitations. This section will explain the types of interview method selected and reveal how the data was collected. Chapter Three is the Analysis section. This section

begins by revealing the patterns of prison violence discovered from the fifteen interviews. Direct quotes from the female inmates will support these findings. Specific issues that will be addressed will include the female participant's definition of prison violence, identify what types of violence exist, discuss the consequences of violence, and reveal the female inmate's suggestions and recommendations on how to reduce prison violence.

The thesis concludes in Chapter Four. Here, I summarize my understandings of prison violence and the circumstances by which it occurs, and provide the women's suggestions on how to reduce and prevent prison violence between women in a provincial correctional facility. Finally, I conclude with some future recommendations about the best alternatives to avoid/ respond to and suggestions on how to reduce future violent occurrences to ensure and maintain a safe correctional facility for both inmates and staff.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO PRISON VIOLENCE

In this section I will discuss the theoretical approaches to prison violence. This discussion will begin with a statistical profile of provincially sentenced women in Canada, and then introduce the theoretical construct of prison violence as a woman's issue. The theoretical analysis will begin by explaining studies of prison violence as variables associated with the *importation model*, the *deprivation model*, link them with feminist literature and studies that have adopted these criminological models in their analysis, and discuss specific feminist studies that have been done on female prison violence.

1.1: A Profile of Provincially Sentenced Women in Canada:

Canada's provincial correctional facilities serve a unique and multifaceted function in the criminal justice system. Consequently, the "jail populations are significantly different than prison populations" (Walker, *et al.*, 1996: 209). For example, the provincial prison population consists of women serving sentences that vary from a one night stay to two years less a day. Walker (1996) observed that provincial institutions have the highest numbers of incarcerated women per year. In 1997, the Canadian Center for Justice Statistics reported that within the last 20 years women admitted to provincial-territorial custody has increased

from 5 per cent to 9 per cent. Another recent study by Trevethan, *et al.*, (1999) revealed that of the total number of inmates in Canada 7 per cent were women in provincial or territorial facilities. Trevethan, *et al.*, (1999) study concurs with this statement as their study found that seven percent of the total Canadian inmate population were women incarcerated in provincial institutions, compared to only two percent being federally sentenced women. In 1990, Juristat reported 63 percent of women serving provincial sentences were in custody for 30 days or less and only four percent of women were serving sentences equal to or greater than one year (Juristat, 1990: 12). This fact also reveals that provincial institutions have the highest population turnover rate. The breakdown of offences of provincially sentenced women varies. Shaw (1994) notes that three out of every ten women are admitted for failure to pay a fine, breaches of court orders or probation orders. Trevethan (1999) found that the most common offences among women in provincial-territorial facilities were drug related. Other common offences of provincially sentenced women involve minor infractions, such as offences involving drinking, prostitution, theft or fraud, and a large percentage are in jail for the first time, whereas a quarter of the women have served sentences before (Shaw, 1994a: 15-16). A recent Ontario survey concluded that in 1991, women charged with violent offences consisted of only 19 per cent of the total population of provincially sentenced women (Shaw, 1994: 8). However, this statistic is vague and permits misinterpretations because it does not explain who the women were violent with nor the circumstances under which the violence occurred. For example, many women incarcerated for violence have reacted violently against abusers.

Provincial institutions contain a diverse population and the inmates are of various ages, races, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds. A report documented that about 58 per cent of women in provincial custody, in terms of age were under 39 and specified that women aged 45 and older represent 41 per cent of those accused of thefts of less than a 1000\$. (Canadian Crime Statistics, 1993: 61). As of 1999, the average age for a female inmate is even younger. Trevethan's study revealed the average age was 35. Margaret Shaw's survey entitled 'Ontario Women in Conflict with the Law, ' concluded that of the Ontario institutions polled, 32 per cent of women had been charged with property offences, 22 per cent with drug offences, and 19 per cent with violent offences. Shaw also revealed that 41 percent were serving their first sentence and 26 percent had served five or more sentences. In 1993, Johnson and Rodgers concluded that, more than 25 percent of women are sentenced for various property offences, that include fraud, and the remaining women are incarcerated for moral and public-order offences, such as; prostitution, drinking, traffic, or drug offences with only nine percent who were involved in minor assaults. Johnson and Rodgers (1993) and Bouvier (1982) concluded that provincial sentences for women are generally less than six months, with an average of 60 days, and with an average of 40 per cent serving less than 14 days. Trevethan *et al.*, (1999) study revealed an increase in average sentence length, reporting the average as "approximately five months" (Trevethan, 1999:10).

The number of Canadian women being charged continues to increase, while the socio-cultural factors of women being incarcerated have remained consistent. Past research² has revealed women sentenced to provincial facilities are generally in their early thirties, single, have low levels of education, are unemployed, with a disproportionately high percentage being Aboriginal. In 1990, First Nation women accounted for 33 percent of incarcerated women in Canadian Institutions, but comprised only three percent of the overall Canadian population. (Juristat, 1990: 118 ; Shaw, 1994: 16). A recent Statistics Canada (1999) report revealed that 34 percent of female provincial inmates achieved grade nine, which was also scored as the highest level of scholastic achievement. The same study reported that within the average female provincial population the women had an average age of 31 years and that 75 percent were single. (Statistics Canada, 1999: 21-24). The numbers of women in conflict with the law continue to increase as the age, level of education, and numbers of children continue to decrease.

1.2: Statistical Data on Prison Violence:

Porporino (1984; 1985; 1986) states that the existence and prevalence of prison violence remains difficult to confirm, but concluded that the rates of violence in Canada's

² See Trevethan, 1999 ; Hatch and Faith, 1989 ; Johnson, 1986.

male prisons are high. Researchers³ have suggested that acts of violence are probably under reported, primarily because inmates are unwilling to file a report against another inmate for fear of further reprimands. Prison violence is not only associated with the definition of an inmate's individual interpretation of violence but susceptible to the correctional officers interpretation and their accordance to issues of social control within the correctional facility. Many feminist researchers⁴ concluded that correctional officers charge women for more trivial institutional misbehaviour than men, because correctional staff expect stereotypical traits, that conform to perceived definitions of domesticity and femininity from female inmates. Thus, any deviation from these expectations or stereotypes can result in an infraction and the inmates becomes labelled a '*difficult inmate.*' These '*feminine*' expectations are reflected in the types of institutional offences that women are reprimanded and subsequently punished for not exhibiting.

Violence in prison is also associated with the inmates behaviour. Many male researchers have analysed this issued but few feminists have done so. Feminist researchers may have had difficult addressing this issue because when explaining violence they have always cast women as victims, and not as aggressors. Prison violence in all female correctional facilities is not explicable within these theoretical approaches, and requires an

³ Cooley, 1992. 1992a ; Bowker, 1985 ; Clemmer. 1966

⁴ See Shaw. 1991a ; Kersten, 1990 ; Madaraka-Sheppard, 1986 ; Hattem. 1984 ; Nesbitt and Agento. 1984 ; Lindquist. 1980.

explanation that integrates the women as active agents and integrates the power relationships and dynamics amongst women. Shaw and Dubois suggest that ignoring “women’s use of violence does them a great disservice,” because it denies the psychological consequences, social implications, and further marginalizes women who abuse or were abused by other women (Shaw and Dubois, 1995: 5). Not acknowledging women as victimizers and victims of other women, is not only a false statement, but attributes, equates, and blames *all* violence against women, on men.

1.3: Criminological Literature on Prison Violence:

Criminological literature that has addressed the issue of prison violence have focussed on two major perspectives, the deprivation and importation model. The *deprivation model* explains inmate aggression, tension, and violent behaviour, as a result of being confined in an environment which subjects its inhabitants to punitive conditions and deprives them of their basic needs. It is this deprivation that enhances stressors and sparks violent behavioural responses that erupt in violent behaviour. Sykes (1958) termed the prison’s tense and oppressive experiences as the ‘*pains of imprisonment.*’ These ‘*pains of imprisonment*’ include withholding or the threat of withholding “material goods and services; the constant surveillance of the guard; the attack on one’s self-esteem; the deprivation of heterosexual activities; the loss of liberty; and the deprivation of security”

(Giallombardo, 1966: 5). Some researchers⁵ have suggested that these 'pains of imprisonment' combined with the exposure to the prison living conditions are stressful and can act as triggers for women's underlying fears and emotions.

Other researchers⁶ support the deprivation model have also identified variables related to the sterility of prison life such as, over crowding, lack of visitation privileges, minimal prison treatment programs, lack of support and encouragement by Correctional staff, inconsistency of prison rule enforcement. More specifically, deprivation studies have concentrated on the length of time an inmate is confined,⁷ phases of an inmate's institutional career (Wellford, 1967 ; Garabedian, 1963 ; Wheeler, 1961) powerlessness or alienation (Thomas, 1977 ; Thomas and Zingraff, 1976) interaction with other inmates, (Wheeler, 1961) and orientation of inmates toward staff (Schwartz, 1971). Bowker (1985) concluded his research on prison violence, stating that violence lacks any goal other than to reduce tension.

Other variables associated with the *deprivation model* have included the orientation of the institution. For example, Mitchell (1969) reported that whether an institution is of

⁵ Faith. 1995 ; Shaw and Dubois. 1995 ; Shaw. 1995 ; Kersten. 1990 ; Axon. 1989 ; Porporino & Doherty. 1985.

⁶ See Light. 1990 ; Cooke. 1989 ; Silberman. 1988 ; Barak-Glantz. 1985 ; Gaes and McGuire. 1985 ; Feld. 1977 ; Ellis. Grasmick and Gilman. 1974.

⁷ See Thomas. 1977 ; Schwartz. 1971 ; Tittle and Tittle. 1964 ; Wheeler. 1961.

custodial or treatment orientation, can affect the rates of violent incidents between inmates and against Correctional Staff. Studies by Cooley (1992) and Mann (1967) concluded, that an inmate's self-image and behaviour change regardless of whether the prison confines the inmate in a dormitory or cell style institution. These studies suggest that if an inmate has the predisposition to act violently during incarceration the individual will, regardless of the correctional facilities' orientation or structural layout. Cooley (1992) explained that violence is a natural development because "violence and victimization are woven into the very fabric of social reaction in prison" Another researcher whose work on prison violence reflected aspects of the deprivation model was Donald Clemmer. In his 1966 novel, The Prison Community, found that prison is a self-containing unit with minimal outside influences and concluded that it is a 'culture in itself,' which has its own rules of appropriate behaviour. Consequently, relationships between inmates are intertwined with issues of power, prestige, and control that contribute to the maintenance, reproduction, and preservation of "the prison hierarchy and the status quo" (Eaton, 1993: 61). Therefore, due to the deprivation of outside influences the inmate social structure is composed of distorted images of complex intertwined and imposed relationships that ultimately influence each inmate's behaviour differently. In 1966, another deprivation model theorist, Irving Goffman theorized that all humans experience a change in behaviour when confined in an institution separate from free society. Goffman findings suggest that attributes such as deprivation, frustration, lack of privacy, degradation, and powerlessness are experienced by inmates to intense degrees.

Feminist literature that adopts the deprivation model has linked physical aggression to the psychological stress women experience while incarcerated. Mandaraka-Sheppard's (1986) study based on female prisons in England and Wales, highlights the importance of the women's perceptions of events and the dynamics of interaction in the prison setting. She reported that the female inmates in her study, believed that an inmate's monotony and willingness to provoke fights and arguments were the main factors that lead to prison violence. Mandaraka-Sheppard concluded that the rates of physical violence revealed the highest percentage of those involved were younger women and that the violent incidents were primarily between individuals and not in groups.

Another feminist writer who adopted aspects of the deprivation model was Karlene Faith. In 1987, she published an influential and female-oriented piece that proved informative. In her article published in Adelberg and Currie's, Too Few to Count: Canadian Women in Conflict with the Law, she focuses specifically on the actual violence in women's prisons. This article was later printed in a revised version of the 1987 book, entitled In Conflict with the Law: Women and the Canadian Justice System. The article discussed her work with female inmates who expressed feeling like 'children' subjected to a regime where they are expected to unquestionably obey those with power over them. She found that the actual rate of prison violence is significantly lower and substantially less serious than the violence between male inmates.

The second theoretical approach used in this study was the *importation model*. The importation model explains aggression as the result of numerous complex interpersonal exchanges. Therefore, a single violent encounter is a response to an individual's thoughts, feelings, reasons, justifications, and personalities which are intertwined and play powerful roles in determining behaviour. Importation characteristics, such as "hostility, anger, suspiciousness, impulsiveness, social withdrawal and denial of hostile feelings" are therefore linked to the violent prison inmate who directs aggression and frustration both externally onto others and towards oneself by attempting suicide, slashing or being anorexic.⁸ (Hunter, 1993: 3).

Other researchers, such as Wilson (1986) suggested that lower rates of prison violence in female facilities is a result of women having more compliant attitudes and greater respect for authority. Frost and Averill (1974) explained that these lower rates were because women repress their anger and prolong expressing themselves. Campbell (1993) linked women's responses to aggression as a learned response explaining that women respond to their aggression with a "sense of shame" because girls learn at a young age that aggression is a failure of personal control. They also theorized that the differences between prison violence in male and female correctional facilities are attributed to the differential socialization of men and women in the use of anger and aggression.

⁸ See Shaw and Dubois. 1995 : Hunter. 1993.

Kirsta's (1994) comparative study of nonviolent female inmates and violent female inmates, concluded that the violent inmates revealed characteristics of being antisocial, with lower self-esteem and less confidence than the nonviolent inmates. Krista also reported that because prison has a hierarchical structure, power relationships result and this imbalance of power can "increase the levels of violence and alienation in women." Thus, some women may act violently to regain a sense of personal power.

Feminist literature that supports the importation model are more frequently substantiated by researchers. In fact, Giallombardo (1966) reported that most "studies on women within prisons have tended to apply the importation perspective," when attempting to explain any phenomenon. Her research concluded that the prison subculture is a reflection of the inmate's pre-prison social world, individual histories and experiences before entering prison will have shaped the inmate's personality, and therefore determine their behaviour in prison. Consequently, different human beings experience prison differently. Variables identified as influencing the prison experience included socio-demographic factors, such as; age at the time of first arrest or conviction, race, history of violence, substance abuse, sexual identity,⁹ socio-cultural factors, such as criminal orientation,¹⁰ individual-level for a

⁹ Specific researchers include. Gaes and McGuire. 1985 ; Poole and Regoli. 1983 ; Ellis. Grasmick. and Gilman. 1974 ; Schwartz. 1971.

¹⁰ Genders and Player. 1989: 71.

aggression,¹¹ social class,¹² pre-prison employment stability, contact with the extra prison world,¹³ prior imprisonment commitments,¹⁴ and prisoner role types.¹⁵ Shaw and Dubois' (1995) study explained that violent behaviour in prison is influenced by individual personalities and histories. These characteristics combined influence how inmates experience the organizational structure of the correctional facilities (Schneider, 1996 ; Sylvester *et al.*, 1977). They also suggested that aggression and violence directed against other inmates or at oneself is symbolic of the women's past experiences of abuse¹⁶, and as a result of their victimization the women have learned inappropriate ways of handling violence or expressing frustration and anger. Therefore, in prison where tensions are stressful, underlying fear and emotions are triggered and they are unable to practice self-control.

Axon (1989) reports that many female offenders come from very abusive backgrounds, as many were either victimized and/or have not learned socially appropriate ways of handling frustration. Mixed with this are women suffering from unrecognized,

¹¹ Specific researchers include. Gaes and McGuire. 1985 ; Poole and Regoli. 1983 ; Ellis, Grasmick. and Gilman. 1974 ; Schwartz, 1971.

¹² Specific researchers include McCorkle. 1995 and Thomas. 1973.

¹³ Thomas, 1977.

¹⁴ Specific researchers include, Tittle and Tittle, 1964 : Thomas. 1973.

¹⁵ Schwartz. 1971.

¹⁶ See also Axon, 1989.

unexpressed grief, rage, hence their emotions become volatile and their inability to control their frustration turned aggression becomes very weak and tenuous. In agreement, with Axons' conclusions, Canadian researchers Shaw and Dubois (1995) added that in conjunction with dysfunctional family backgrounds, female inmates also had histories of physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, and substance abuse. Pollack (1994) also concluded that women interpret the prison experience with an intense psychological effect, associated with feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. As in previous research, women in this study also interpreted the prison experience to the psychological experiences of being a child or being subjected to a sexual or physical assault.

Karlene Faith's (1993), Unruly Women: The Politics of Confinement & Resistance emphasized how significantly lower the female rates of prison violence are compared to their male counterparts. She attributed these differences to the gender socialization process, where women and men are taught to express their frustrations differently. She also correlated the absence of routine violence in women's prison as consistent with the absence of violence between women in general. Faith concluded that provincial facilities have higher rates of violence between female inmates than federal facilities. She revealed the women she had interviewed indicated that there were higher incidents of violence in the provincial facilities because the women knew they would only be there for a short time, were younger, and had less privileges to lose for a longer period of time. Faith's description of institutional violence focussed on women in prison and again stressed that the frequency of prison violence is

relatively low, stating that “women who enter prison are physically safer than they are on the outside” (Faith, 1993: 237). She concluded that violence was overwhelmingly not inmate versus inmate, but predominately the prison’s regime upon the inmate or the inmate upon themselves. Faith also emphasized that the majority of infractions that the female inmates are charged for would frequently be over-looked within a male institution.¹⁷

Few feminists have addressed the issue of female prison violence exclusively, nor has a feminist analysis been the traditional approach to analysing this phenomenon. We suggest two possible explanations. First, is the lack of importance given to the lower female inmate population. However, as we have stated earlier, feminists may have had difficulty addressing female prison violence because violence among women denotes that not all violent acts by women are in direct response to abusive male-female relationships.¹⁸ Prison violence in an all female correctional facility then becomes inexplicable within these theoretical approaches, and requires an explanation centered on the power relationships and dynamics amongst women. Whereas traditionally the issue of violence when related to women has focussed primarily on women as victims, and not as aggressors.

¹⁷ See also O’Dwyer, Wilson, and Carlen, 1987.

¹⁸ See Shaw 1995 : Campbell 1993 : Faith, 1993 : Simpson, 1991 : Worrell 1990 ; Allen, 1987 ; Carlen, *et al.*, 1985.

To understand female prison violence, we must apply a feminist approach that emphasizes gender relations and the oppression of women in our society. However, we must also recognize that inmates are social actors that interact with other inmates and correctional staff in a closed environment with complex power relationships. It is within this dynamic environment that we need to explore the question of violence in women's prisons, while taking into consideration the perspectives of the importation and deprivation models.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

In this section I will explain the five methodological dimensions of this thesis. First, I will explain why the qualitative approach was chosen as the method of study. Secondly, I will explain the kind of interview selected. I will set the stage for the analysis by describing the provincial correctional facilities where the female participants were interviewed. I will then introduce each woman based on the information collected from the *'Fact Sheets.'* Finally, I will discuss the limitations of the study.

The issue of female inmate violence in Canada's provincial institutions has not been exclusively or extensively researched. An exact statistical rate of female prison victimization is unknown. There has been some qualitative research conducted on female prison victimization, but the reports have been community based. This means that the women shared their experiences after their release from the Correctional Facility. Located at the centre of our analysis of prison violence will be the provincial female inmate's perspective. The aim of this study is to identify whether prison violence exists among the Canadian provincial female population. I will accomplish this by reflecting on the participant's experiences with prison violence by identifying reoccurring themes found in the women's interviews. Specific areas of discussion and analysis will include the female inmate's definition and what types of violence qualify as examples of violent behaviour, whether there

are explanations for the behaviour, the consequences of prison violence, and finally, the women's suggestions on how to reduce prison violence. We believe that by focussing on this phenomenon, we can eventually understand it.

After choosing the problem of female prison violence as the issue I wish to investigate for this thesis, I was confronted with what research method would best examine and deconstruct this phenomenon. We selected the qualitative method because we wanted to reflect the realistic experience of prison violence from the female inmates perspective. We believed that the inmate is the most knowledgeable about prison violence. This study gave them the opportunity to discuss prison violence from their perspectives. Secondly, we chose a qualitative study because of the limited information available on female prison violence. There has been limited research and statistical records accumulated about provincial prison violence from the female inmate's perspective. These facts encouraged us to provide the female inmates with the opportunity to identify and describe their experiences of violence in prison. The women's personal knowledge and experiences with prison violence provided the framework for our analysis. This study allowed us to conduct a female specific analysis about prison violence and reveal their experience.

There are different types of qualitative approaches we could have selected. However, due to the lack of past research exclusively on female prison violence, we believe that any research addressing female prison violence must begin with the women's definition

and descriptions of their experiences with violence during their incarceration. To document the women's perceptions, interpretations, and understandings, we chose an open-ended interview as our tool to record the women's experiences. We selected the interview because it is the best methodological approach when working with "relatively powerless groups" while not perpetuating the exploitations of women (Reinhartz, 1992: 131). The "open-ended interviews were based on the premise that the ideas, attitudes, thoughts, and emotions of people must be examined and understood in order to develop policies and programs that rearrange the exploitative aspects of social relations" (Ritchie, 1996: 18). The open-ended interview provided a framework in which the participant could share their perspectives, opinions, and their perceptions of reality in a non directive context, as opposed to testing our own preconceived hypothesis. Although the interviews followed general guidelines, the women were encouraged to elaborate on the aspects of prison violence that were most important to them. As pointed out by Kohler-Riessman, (1987) this allowed the emphasis on listening to what the women had to say rather than on a process which the researcher inflexibly directs the interview. According to feminist ethicist, Janice Raymond, the open-ended interview is also beneficial because it "maximizes discovery and description" (Raymond, 1979: 16). Sociologist Sherma Gluck theorized that the interview is a feminist encounter and a form of '*oral history*' because it not only provides in-depth information but "creates new material about women, validates women's experience, enhances communication among women, discovers women's roots, and develops a previously denied sense of continuity" (Gluck, 1979: 5). Compared to "more structured qualitative methods

... [these types of] ... interviews offered a more intense opportunity to learn about subjects' backgrounds, opinions, feelings, and the meanings they give to the ... experiences in their lives" (Ritchie, 1996: 16-17). Grouped together we can examine these interviews quantitatively. The '*one on one*' interview was selected to allow the female inmate the opportunity to share information she may not be comfortable discussing in the presence of fellow inmates. The goal of this research was to provide these women with an opportunity to voice their self-knowledge. '*Giving voice*' to the female inmates gave them the opportunity to be recorded in their own exact words and to clarify and convey their ideas, thoughts, and memories in a clear and knowledgeable format, while acknowledging that *she* is "the expert on herself" (Scarth, 1994: 35). Therefore, emphasizing the importance of learning "from the women themselves rather than approach the interviews with rigid preconceived notions - especially in terms of normative and deviant behaviour" (Ritchie, 1996: 17).

The interviews ranged in length from twenty to ninety minutes, with an average interview lasting approximately thirty minutes. With the permission of the volunteer participants, the interviews were tape recorded and all information collected remains confidential with the participant's identity remaining anonymous. As researcher, I, transcribed all recorded information carefully and accurately to ensure reliability by changing all details that could identify the women or the institutions. We transcribed the interviews exactly how the women spoke and expressed themselves. There was no editing

done to the interviews because it makes the *voice* less effective and could take away from the validity of the women's message. Therefore, grammatical structure and most swear words remain in the transcripts. This study is based on the interviews of the participating female inmates. No additional resources, such as institutional records, files, reports, nor secondary interviews from Correctional staff, councillors, family, and friends were used.

Correctional facilities tend to be either treatment oriented, where rehabilitative programs are encouraged and provided, or custodial oriented where inmates are warehoused and minimal programs are available. According to Mitchell (1969) the orientation of the facility influences the rates of violence. In the interest of preserving and maintaining the anonymity of the women and the correctional facilities, we will refer to the prisons as '*Institution A*' and '*Institution B*,' from this point on.

A custodial '*Institution A*' was a provincial correctional facility in Ontario that reflected characteristics associated with that of a custodial orientation. This jail housed male and female inmates who were confined to separate dormitories, but frequently came into contact with each other. This jail was a bilingual institution but whose residents and staff were primarily English-speaking. The dormitory had a capacity to hold twenty-six women at a time. The women spent most of their days together in the same dormitory, with exception to the yard, schooling, and religious / spiritual expression. The prison offered few treatment programs and the primary objective was on warehousing the inmates and

maintaining the jail routine. The interviews in '*Institution A*' revealed that the women were very distrustful and suspicious of fellow inmates and staff, often expressing beliefs that the prison staff was against them. The inmates reported limited interaction between staff and inmates, the role of Correctional staff focussed on the observation and supervision of inmates ensuring minimal rule infractions.

'*Institution B*' was a Quebec provincial correctional facility with a treatment orientation. It was a Francophone institution, with a minority population of Anglophones. In this jail women were lodged in individual cells in several sectors of the prison based on their security level and their present sentence length. Women were confined to their cells during sleeping hours, and were free to visit 'common' areas, such as the TV room throughout the day. There were various treatment and school programs, and the inmates reported that counsellors were readily available. Inmates did not express overt trust in other inmates or in the staff, but did convey that they partially trusted some staff personnel.

In '*Institution A*,' a female Correctional officer extended the invitation orally and scheduled the interview for the afternoon of that same day. The interviews were conducted in the late Spring of 1996. In '*Institution B*,' a female Counsellor approached the female participants in a similar manner. The interviews were conducted in the early Summer of 1997. Confidentiality between staff and inmates was maintained by approaching the women and asking them to participate in an interview about the '*prison experience*.' It was only

when the woman was alone with the researcher did the researcher specify that the interview would focus on '*prison violence*.' At this time, the women were given the opportunity to withdraw from the interview, without bias. Consequently, one woman from '*Institution A*,' did decline to be interviewed on the topic of prison violence. Speculation dictates that she may have declined in fear of violent repercussions from fellow inmates who may have interpreted her accepting to be interviewed as reporting on the activities of fellow inmates. This action may also reflect her belief in being loyal to her fellow inmates. Her unwillingness to participate in the study may also reflect her lack of trust in a possible staff member, or believing the researcher may report her findings to correctional officers.

The researcher used a '*Fact Sheet*' before the interview.¹⁹ The '*Fact Sheet*' was used primarily as a tool to gather information from the participants that the researcher identified as potential variables, such as age, level of education, charges, prior incidents of incarceration, and length of prior sentences served in provincial Correctional Facilities. However, it is important to recognize that the '*Fact Sheet*' also assisted in simplifying and facilitating the introduction process between the researcher and the inmate. Yeandle (1984) considered this first contact an important phase, not only for the data collected but for its function as an 'ice-breaker,' enabling women to relax and talk about themselves. The '*Fact Sheet*' served a dual purpose. These questions invited the women to disclose information

¹⁹ A sample of the '*Fact Sheet*' is provided in the Annex listed as Annex 1 on page 125.

which was very well known to them, thus putting them at their ease, and convincing them that the interview had relevance to them as individuals. The female offenders in the sample averaged about 34.5 years of age, with a range of 20 to 57. In total, eight women were Caucasian, two were Native, two were black, and two were Inuit. A description of the sample by race classification was done only to recognize cultural differences that can influence the women's interpretation, adaptation, and experiences of prison. The length of time spent in prison ranged from five to eighteen months. Three of the female inmates were presently serving their first sentence. One woman incarcerated in '*Institution A*,' had previously served several provincial sentences, but at the time of the interview she was awaiting trial with the possibility of serving a federal term.

Although a small sample of women participated in this study, we believe that it is a sufficient number of interviews to reveal common patterns about a female inmate's experience of prison violence. Three of the female participants were serving their first sentence, and at the time of the interview had been incarcerated a very brief time. It is important to recognize that the "great majority of provincial sentences for women in Canada are six months or less, and almost 40% are 14 days or less." (Shaw, 1994a:15). Despite the women's short time in prison, we believed their observations and experiences contributed a richness to the overall analysis of female prison violence. It was essential to include these women in our sample regardless of their short time spent in jail because as studies have shown first time offenders consist of a significant percentage of the overall female prison

population. Secondly, we believe that any time spent in jail was long enough to have observations and form conclusions, about their jail experiences. Lastly, we discovered that these first-time offenders provided us with a starting point about the women's perceptions of prison violence. We found that the more time a female inmate spent in jail, the more desensitized she became to the violence around her.

This qualitative study does not claim that this sample is a thorough representation of female inmates or their points of view. The ethnic and cultural diversity of the female participants reflect the shared experiences of many provincially incarcerated women qualify as prison violence. The female participants were selected by random sample. The only qualifying criterion for a participant was that the woman was presently serving a provincial sentence in a Canadian provincial correctional facility. A total of fourteen women were interviewed from two correctional facilities. Pseudonyms were used and we have disguised or omitted any identifying characteristics to guarantee the women's anonymity.

In late Spring of 1996, the female participants from '*Institution A*' were the first women interviewed. The seven female participants were Cathie, Lynda, Sammy, Sasha, Suzanne, Daisy, and Vicky. The average age of the female participants was lower in '*Institution A,*' with an average of 32.5 years.

Cathie was a 33 year old white woman, who had served several provincial sentences

for various crimes. Although still a young woman, she shared various experiences of violence inside and outside of the jail. These experiences contributed to an obvious 'street sense' which ensured her a perceived physical and emotional safety.

Lynda was a 48 year old First Nation woman who had been incarcerated in provincial institutions several times and had served federal sentences. However, the sentence she was serving at the time of this interview, was her first offence in 13 years.

Sammy was a 34 year old First Nation woman, who had come into conflict with the law numerous times and had served several jail sentences in various institutions since early adolescence. Sammy had been involved with criminal activities since adolescence and served time in juvenile detention centres. As a result of her criminal career, she did two concurrent terms in the Federal penitentiary, receiving her first Federal sentence at the age of 19. Sammy was very active in her Native Spirituality and stated that she is very active with the jail 'Sisterhood and Brotherhood.'

Sasha was a young 22 year old mother who was serving her first sentence in a large provincial institution. She was of First Nation descent, but labelled herself as a white woman. She did not participate in any Native Spirituality sessions within the jail. She had been sent to this larger facility from her hometown which was approximately four hours away. Thus, due to the travelling time she was unable to see her children or family.

However, her husband was serving his provincial sentence for the same crime in '*Institution A*,' as well. At the time of the interview she had been at the jail for six weeks.

Suzanne was a 39 year old white woman who was also serving her first sentence in a provincial facility. Her interview clearly showed that she was an articulate woman and was able to detach herself from her new environment and analyse the interactions around her. Suzanne was a quite soft spoken woman who described her experience of prison life from the perspective of an observer. She admitted that she spent most of her days on her bed alone, reading, and refraining from even minimal interaction with others. Her observations indicated that the prison experience was almost surreal, explaining that the prison world was like no other and has a culture of its own. At the time of the interview she had been incarcerated a short time, but reported that she had already observed and learned many prison rules.

Daisy was a young Inuit woman, who at the age of 20 had already served numerous short term sentences as an adult in '*Institution A*' She had also served sentences in juvenile detention centres. She was a quiet woman who spoke of the racism she encountered within the prison. Despite her young age she spoke generously of the violence she had experienced both outside and inside the prison, and connected both experiences of victimization as equally horrific and traumatizing.

Vicky was a 32 year old woman who had a lot of experiences with violence both in prison and in society. She had routinely been involved with the criminal justice system. Unlike some of her fellow inmates, Vicky did not reveal signs of being desensitized by the violence she had seen. She defined violence in the more perceived extreme terms in the form of physical violence, such as aggression resulting in hospitalization or death. Her definition, description, and experiences ranged from minor forms of violence between inmates to the more serious assaults. Vicky reported that her 'criminal career' began with minor drug offences as a juvenile and progressed to more serious offences that included violence. She was incarcerated on remand and possibly facing a federal sentence term.

The second set of interviews with female inmates occurred in early Summer of 1997. The seven female participants from '*Institution B*' were Alice, Alysyn, Jaycee, Jean, Lisa, Shawna, and Teri. The average age of the female participants was higher in '*Institution B*,' with an average of 36.5 years.

Alice was a 57 year old white woman. At the time of the interview, she was serving her second sentence in '*Institution B*' for the same type of offence. She was one of the oldest women interviewed for this study and reported that due to her age, she experienced some sense of safety. She reported that the younger inmates accorded older women respect by protecting them. Alice stated that this form of respect was accorded to the older women because of their role as 'mother.'

Alysyn was a 37 year old Black woman who was a recent landed immigrant from the Caribbean Islands. Alysyn reported that there was no 'real' violence in '*Institution B*,' but then went on to describe violent incidents she had witnessed. Her coping mechanisms included laughter and ridiculing everything. Alysyn's lack of seriousness about anything proved to be a major contention between her and other inmates.

Jaycee was a 20 year old Inuit woman who was transferred from the North to serve her provincial sentence. Despite her young age, she revealed a traumatic life history that included experiences of abuse, neglect, and crime far beyond the scope of most 20 year old women. She was an angry woman who admitted that it was her anger, lack of self-control, and violent behaviour that had resulted in her receiving each of her jail sentences. It was also this self-knowledge that justified her self-imposed isolation from fellow inmates. She was presently serving her fourth sentence, each in excess of six month sentences.

Jean was a 57 year old white woman serving her first provincial sentence. She had served over a month and a half at the time of the interview. A quiet prisoner, Jean expressed her overwhelming fear of fellow inmates and the prison environment. She reported being so scared of other inmates that her anxiety and fear of prison would act as a reminder to avoid further involvement with crime.

Lisa was a 28 year old white woman. Although young in years, her experience with crime and institutions revealed that she had experience beyond her years. Lisa reflected signs of being institutionalized. She reported feeling safe and emphasized that in jail she had no problems and did not worry about enemies. She described her jail time as her vacation time from the stress of her street life. Lisa revealed that she was very street wise and had enough experience in the correctional system to know about appropriate jail behaviour.

Shawna was a 33 year old black female. Although serving a present sentence of a year, she had at the time of the interview been incarcerated in '*Institution B*' for three months. She also had a long history of involvement with crime and had served jail sentences in both Quebec and the Maritimes. Shawna was large in stature and her voice was one that was loud and clear. She stated that many women felt intimidated by her, simply because of her size.

The last woman interviewed was Teri. She was a 24 year old white woman of Italian descent. Although it was her first sentence in a provincial jail, she had quickly learned the rules of appropriate prison behaviour and applied them systematically to her interactions with fellow inmates. Teri was a calm woman who reported that she participated in her new environment, but made sure to abide by the rules.

As with any research there are always issues that one must recognize that has limitations. Within this qualitative study, we subdivided these limitations into three main groups. The first factor is the study itself because the open-ended questions may have shaped the results of the interview. A point of consideration may have been to ask the female inmates about their daily experiences in prison, and allow the women to identify violence as an issue. However, due to the time restrictions and the scope of a Master's thesis, we asked the women directly whether prison violence exists and if it is an issue in the provincial correctional facility. Therefore, the researcher based the study on the assumption that there is violence in prison, and directed the women to identify what types of violence exist and to provide descriptions.

A second factor that may have influenced the study's results was the researcher herself. The participant's answers may have been different had the researcher's gender, age, race, and reasons for doing the interview been other than scholastic. For example, the inmate's responses may have been different had the same questions been posed by a journalist instead of a student, a man versus a woman, an older woman versus a younger one. Given that the average age of the female inmates was 34.5.

Race may have also acted as a limitation. The researcher may have been at an advantage, because she was visibly white, with First Nation ancestry. Despite contradicting

feminist studies that argue whether self-disclosure is a good feminist practice²⁰, the researcher in this study chose to share this detail with the female participants. Therefore, the First Nation women may have been more comfortable with the researcher because of race commonalities. Concurrently, the Caucasian women may have also been more comfortable because the researcher was visibly Caucasian. Therefore, responses may have differed had the researchers' race been any different from what it was.

On the level of scholastic attainment the researcher was above the average, and the female inmates may have interpreted this as a 'superior / power' characteristic. When asked about scholastic or professional achievements, the researcher did attempt to minimize its relevance.²¹ Although the researcher attempted to reassure the prisoners that their participation would remain confidential, this researcher may not have been able to surpass the inmate's "suspicion and distrust and secure reliable interview material" (Mann, 1967: 8). Therefore, as in all interviews and research some responses from the female inmates may have been embellished to be more interesting to the researcher. Various theorists have concluded that researchers must be aware of class appropriation. Class appropriation occurs when one is writing about another class / group that one does not belong to, and attempts to analyse and interpret the interactions of that group.

²⁰ See Ptacek. 1988 ; Bristow and Esper. 1988 ; Bobyk, *et al.*, 1987 ; Arendell, 1986 ; Webb, 1984 ; Melamed. 1983.

²¹ A sample of the '*Consent Form*' is provided in the Annex listed as Annex 2 on page 126.

The third factor to be aware of is the participant's intentions. As a researcher, I did not question the female inmates about their motives to participate in the interview. Speculation dictates that there are various reasons for the female inmate's participation in the study. For example, the study / interview gave the women an opportunity for a change in the inmates' prison routine, and to meet with an 'outsider.'

Another limitation of this study, may be the deliberate omission of interviews with correctional staff, treatment staff, and Superintendents. Stanton (1980) theorizes that when researching inmates we should include the perspectives of individuals familiar with the inmate's family relationships, jailers, counsellors, and other prison personnel. Although this procedure would provide a thorough analysis of prison violence and its psychological and physical effects on the female inmate, this analysis is beyond the scope of this study. Due to limited past research, I began with the female inmate's perspective and definition, to establish a framework in which to examine prison violence.

Lastly, with any research involving participants, there is a tension involved in the writing of their experiences (Eaton, 1993: 127). Maintaining the ethical boundaries of researcher, I remained objective, methodological, and scientific, while being careful of issues of reciprocity, awareness of risk and discomfort experienced by the women. I adhered to my responsibilities by concluding the interview and providing suggestions to speak with jail counsellors if the interviewees showed signs of being emotionally upset. Any population

being studied is vulnerable to the researcher's interpretations, and this research focussed on one of the most vulnerable populations, the female prison population. The researcher made a conscious effort to minimize any potential symbols of power. The researcher's language was not formal or complicated, clothing and jewellery were simplistic.

My last ethical concern was the ability to analytically situate the women's accounts about prison violence without being skewed by my own experiences, perceptions, expectations, and beliefs of prison violence. The female volunteer interviewees expressed thoughts, feelings, and opinions about their experiences with prison violence provided from their own perspective. Hence, I will then provide an analysis of the material. Despite these limitations, "while no doubt significant, are balanced by the rich multi-textured data that emerged from the life-history interviews. More importantly, it served the overall purpose of the study, which was to explore and explain a particular set of women's experiences" with prison violence (Ritchie, 1996: 30).

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS

In the analysis section of my thesis, I will explore the interview responses of the female participants. Their interviews will establish the significance of prison violence for women themselves and situate this phenomenon as a social problem. The women's interviews about prison violence revealed four distinctive patterns. These patterns included the description of the types of prison violence, explanations for its occurrence, the consequences of prison violence, and suggestions about how to reduce it. The female inmates interviewed for this research revealed information that contributed to fascinating conclusions. Although each woman had unique experiences and interpreted these experiences during their incarceration personally, the interviews reflect that provincially incarcerated women share some commonalities. The first section will begin by addressing the types of violence that were the identified in the women's interviews. Second, I will explore some of the women's explanations for this violence. The third subsection will review some of the consequences of being violent in prison. Lastly, I will outline the women's suggestions on how we can reduce prison violence.

As indicated by the interviews in this study, most inmates participate minimally and attempt to ignore the conflicts within their social environment. Prison regimes are designed to be repressive and punitive, and it is these conditions that researchers have concluded

increase suicidal tendencies, self-destructive behaviour, and violent interactions between inmates.²² Eaton's (1993) study concluded that female prisoners are more likely to be subject to discipline than their male counterparts. To understand individual and group aggression in prison, we must examine the impact of both the environment and social settings on behaviour. For example, due to the nature of confinement / crowding inmates are often unable to avoid unwanted interaction within their social environment, and under prison circumstances, violence becomes unpredictable, spontaneous, and a reinforced outlet for accumulated frustrations and invested emotional energies. Prisons, by definition, are designed to be an unpleasant experience, but to what degree the woman has negative experiences is ambiguous. Inmates enter the correctional system with expectations of various degrees about prison life. Ultimately the prison inmates are generally unhappy and stressed due to the ambiguity of their new and imposed environment. Thomas (1995) argues that in this restricted environment, the means for resolving disputes may be more limited, severe, and direct.

Davies (1991) also suggests that violence in institutions is an interactive phenomenon based on situational factors. The types of prison violence are multifaceted and are specific consequences of the unique features of a given institution and the inmates at a specific time. For example, problems can develop from "over-crowding, lack of hygienic conditions, poor

²² See Scraton, *et al.*, 1991 ; Porporino, F.J., and Doherty, P., 1985 ; Moos, 1975.

medical facilities and scarce, monotonous and filthy food” (Drapkin, 1976: 103). However, violence between inmates cannot be blamed solely on the prison’s management or security infrastructure. As the female participants in this study suggest, inmate-against-inmate assaults are most common and generally revolve around issues of control and respect. An inmate’s ability to be assertive, dominant, as well as their willingness to act aggressively toward fellow inmates and staff will influence the inmate’s reputation. It is the intensity of being respected and feared that can prevent an inmate from being victimized by anyone else and ensure their survival (Kirsta, 1994: 44). Violence can spark from racist beliefs, personality conflicts, the types of crimes a woman has committed, and previous inmate interactions both inside or outside the institution, or personality and medical disorders that can and do play an important role in human behaviour. The violence can progress from slurs, harassment, and isolation, to beatings and murder.

As the experiences of prison violence differ between the inmates, so can its interpretation and definition. The three women who were serving sentences for the first time support this statement. It is important to distinguish between the first time offenders who had been incarcerated a short time, because their interviews reflected patterns that differed slightly from those women who had served several terms, or had been inside prison for longer periods of time. Collectively, these three women reported higher levels of fear and stress about prison violence and the threat of it. Teri who had been in prison the longest of the three, indicated that she was becoming accustomed to the tension and ever present threat

of attack. She seemed to be on the border making the transition of being a 'new' inmate to the more 'experienced' inmate. She described the prison rules of appropriate behaviour, and what she had learned since her arrival and observed that when inmates conform to these rules, one can avoid potentially violent situations. Teri stressed the rules of respecting others, while insisting on respect from others, indicating that it ensured her survival. On the other hand, Suzanne and Jean were still fearful of their new environment and chose to keep to themselves. They too revealed and acknowledged the types of appropriate prison behaviour, but were still in a state of high anxiety about their environments. Hence, the interviews of these women clearly displayed the perceptions and experiences of prison violence on behalf of many women who are fairly new to the jail environment.

All of the interviews combined outlined the various levels of stress that is sparked by prison violence or the threat of prison violence that female inmates will experience throughout their sentence term. For example, Jean and Suzanne considered all aspects of prison life as violent, compared to Vicky and Lynda who defined prison violence in its extremes and linked it to rape, physical assault, and murder. Therefore, it appears that as women enter the prison system they interpret and define most experiences as extreme forms of violence, but over time experience a sense of desensitization to these experiences and come to define only the extreme forms of violence as real violence.

Section 3.1: Types of Prison Violence:

“There is nothing about this place that has anything to do with freedom in it. Freedom, in any way possible. No free speech. No free thoughts. Nothing free. And that’s what jail is all about.”

(Suzanne, interviewee).

The women’s interviews in this study revealed that there were various types of female prison violence in the Canadian provincial correctional facility. As identified by the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, violence can adopt many forms for all segments of the female population. This report did not identify, discuss, or include female inmate’s experiences with violence in prisons. However, the female participants in this study confirmed that violence is an issue that confronts women and one they must adapt to during their custodial sentence. For the purpose of this study, we will apply, adopt, and adapt the Panel’s labels and definition of violence, as the willful infliction of violence among the female prison population. Similar to the women interviewed by the Panel, the female inmates also categorized types of violence as sexual, psychological, physical, financial, and spiritual. Throughout this research the types of violence defined by the inmates will, adopt those definitions established by the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women.

The definition of violence and description of prison violence was susceptible to individual interpretations by the different female inmates who each used a different criteria to define what qualified as legitimate violence. Two female inmates began their interview by denying any existence of violence within the provincial jail. However, both Alysyn and Lynda later contradicted themselves by providing explicit examples of violence between the inmates. Lynda stated that:

“(…) fighting and violence between people, just doesn’t happen. (…) The only type of violence I’ve really seen is the odd fight. A little fight, here and there but they never amount to much. (…) There are a lot of *cat fights*. That’s two women beating up on each other, and not very seriously by the way. I’ve never seen anybody killed. I’ve never seen anybody brought to the hospital, as a result of violence from another inmate. (…) I haven’t seen anything. Except for yelling and screaming. A lot of yelling and screaming. In here, it’s all petty. It’s all bull shit.”

Lynda later clarified that she defined *real* violence as, someone being killed or an injury serious enough to send an inmate to the hospital. Although Lynda defined *real* violence as violence in its more severe forms, Jean interpreted almost every aspect of prison interaction as violent. So, the spectrum of the definition of violence was quite diverse, ranging from minor to the more serious fatal forms of violence. It is therefore necessary to consider that some inmates may have omitted situations of violence because they do not define them as violence. Despite the different definitions of violence, each woman did provide descriptions that revealed the existence of prison violence in Canadian provincial correctional facilities.

3.1.1: Psychological Violence:

The female participants identified psychological abuse as the most common form of prison violence. This form of abuse was defined as including “shouting, swearing, taunting, threatening degrading, demeaning, inducing fear, gender harassment, witnessing” (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993: 26). For the most part the female participant’s responses agreed with this definition. Cathie stated that there was psychological abuse in jails and admitted that prison violence:

“(…) can get serious. (…) You never know who’s gonna dislike you. (…) You never know when [someone will] snap. When people like that snap, their strength doubles (….) They get stronger.”

She recalled the first-time she was victimized by another female inmate. Cathie described experiencing verbal abuse, that also included bullying, and intimidation, that left her believing that her tormentor was going to kill her.

Lynda extended her definition of psychological abuse to also include taunting, tormenting, rumours, gossip, and innuendoes, such as, racial slurs and false labels of being called a ‘rat.’ She referred to violence in ‘*Institution A*,’ as not real violence, but as stupidity because:

“(...) you got to imagine yourself in a snake pit. To be in a prison with women, ‘cause that’s exactly what it is. You can not trust women. (...) I learned that at an early age. You turn your back, they will stab you. Talk about you and stab you in the back. Snake pit.”

Sasha mentioned how inmate confrontations included high levels of fear as psychological violence. Her interview revealed that many inmates believe that confrontational behaviour toward fellow inmates decreases tension and the possibility of violent repercussions. For example, when faced with the issue of theft in the prison dorm, she and a fellow inmate confronted the situation with anger and announced physical repercussions to the jail thief once she was apprehended. She stated:

“(...) people are just getting fed up and they’re walking around saying, *‘Whoever is the fucking thief in here, when we find out who it is you’re going to be sorry. Your face is going to be rearranged.’*”

Sasha described life in jail as stressful and described the female inmates’ interaction to:

“(...) a bunch of vultures. Everybody is (...) going at it (...) It’s just really sickening. (...) We know we’re punished for being in here, but why can’t we all get along.”

Sammy did not identify psychological abuse as the most dominant form of violence, but she addressed several of its components that included, disagreements, jealousy, and fear through bullying behaviour. Sammy explained that many female inmates are bullies and

“there are girls that come in and try to run the dorm, (...[saying] ...) ‘you’re going to do this, and you do that.’” Sammy suggested that the women’s disagreements is a result of daily prison stressors that the inmates repress but eventually lash out at each other individually as well as, in ‘*cliques*.’

Suzanne, who was serving her first sentence in a provincial correctional facility also identified that psychological violence as the most prevalent form of violence in prison. She also believed that it was the psychological violence between inmates that most affected her. In agreement with the formal definition of psychological violence, Suzanne expanded this definition to include disagreements, emotional abuse, and intimidation. She described the women’s relationships as unstable, and that prison relationships fluctuate. Suzanne described the prison atmosphere as dependant on the day because the women “(...) have their friends. Even with the violence, the same women can sit down and cry. It’s an emotional roller coaster.”

Suzanne described women being threatened, harassed, and intimidated. She emphasized that although the women generally do follow through with their threats, the inmates did not interpret these statements as threats, but as simple verbal warnings. Suzanne reported that threats, harassment, and intimidation between the women occurred every few days. She explained:

“You almost see it automatically when you come in. You almost know, or you’ll hear. There is always someone repeating something. It doesn’t take long before you’ll hear. *‘Okay, who would say that? We’ll find out, and we’ll get her.’* And they do.”

Daisy also identified psychological violence as the most dominant form of prison violence. She admitted that it affected her on a daily basis, in its various forms, but reported that helplessness, harassment, intimidation, and fear affected her the most. Impressively perceptive was her comparison of feeling a lack of personal control in prison, to the helplessness and inability to protect herself from being raped. Daisy described her experience of fear and harassment in prison as:

“(…) hard, ‘cause I feel like I have no control over my own self. People controlling me. So you try to smile more often, but inside I’m really feeling hurt. It’s hard. It’s like being raped, but not. It’s not having control over your own self.”

She later described feeling continually intimidated by others in prison and reported her daily experience of prison life, “like walking on egg shells. I don’t have control over anything. They control me. (...) They think I am worthless.” She linked her experience of psychological violence with hurt feelings, pain, loneliness, feeling alienated and ostracized from the different cliques.

Vicky admitted that she had not only had many encounters with the provincial correctional system, but also with researchers and students doing research. At the time of

the interview, she was incarcerated at a provincial facility, but was possibly facing what would be her first Federal sentence. Vicky identified various forms of violence in prison and emphasized that the overwhelming dominant form of abuse was psychological. Vicky extended the definition of psychological abuse to include an inmate's attitude, social isolation, and ostracization. She provided extensive examples of how inmates including herself used fear and intimidation tactics to command respect. She admitted that she would inform fellow inmates about being quick tempered, and could lose it with the slightest provocation.

The female inmates in *'Institution B'* also identified psychological violence as the most dominant form of prison violence. The inmate's definitions were different but the patterns were overwhelmingly similar to the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women's definition. For example, Alice defined psychological violence, as the dominant form of violence, stating that:

“(...) Prison violence is intimidation. The stronger ones intimidate the weaker ones. They don't actually use (... [physical] ...) violence because they're too afraid of the consequences. I have seen violence here, but the girls end up in the hole. (...) All I hear all day is, sex, drugs, and *'I'm going to smash this one's head,'* and *'I'm going to break that one's bones,'* and *'I'm going to break this one's back.' ”* ”

However, Alice emphasized that despite the frequent threats between the women there is very little physical violence. Alysyn, who was also incarcerated in *'Institution B'* was a landed immigrant who had been incarcerated several times believed that:

“(...) there is no prison violence. No big fights here now. Before, yes. When the Federals were here. A lot. It's the more stressed out ones. The ones waiting to go up on a murder charge, or something bigger than that.”

Jaycee's interview reflected that her definition of psychological violence conformed to the definition provided by the Panel. She described her present prison environment as really violent. She added that:

“prison violence is not good. It's dangerous, also. It's not a game. (...) Being violent and being in jail is more dangerous. It's more serious, 'cause you can stay here more. (...) It's really kinda hard for me to stop being violent.”

Jean, who was serving her first sentence defined her experience of psychological violence as being socially isolated and reported that the jail consisted of numerous cliques that did not communicate and stayed apart from one another. For example, she stated that the “French girls hang out in groups together, and if you ask them anything, they don't answer you.”

Lisa had served numerous provincial sentences in various institutions, including *'Institution A.'* She also identified psychological abuse to be the most predominant form of violence. She was the only participant who made the connection that psychological and

verbal violence was as equally damaging as physical violence. Her interview reflected various forms of abuse identified by the Panel, but reported that insults and degradation were most frequent. Lisa reported that when inmates start:

“yelling, calling each other names. Like ‘*you big fat pig*,’ stuff like that. There’s nothing they can really do because the guards are watching. I mean as far as I’m concerned, the guards shouldn’t even let the yelling go on because that’s just as bad as physical.”

Shawna, who had also served provincial sentences in numerous other provincial institutions in several provinces, and when asked about prison violence she responded that:

“You hear stories, but I’ve never been involved with any. ‘Cause I don’t have that problem. I know there’s a lot of girls that are intimidated and muscled or whatever. I never seen it, but I hear. When I’m in prison, I’m a model prisoner. At the size that I am, I have no problem. Other than that, I’m sure there is. A lot of stuff is hidden.”

Shawna extended her definition of psychological abuse to include the emotional experiences of women who were experiencing personal stressors within their private lives, as well as the circumstances arising due to their incarceration. Shawna described how the stress of other inmates affects many women in the jail. She stated, that empathy stems from having spent a lot of time with certain inmates, hence a sense of family develops. Shawna concluded that being violent in prison serves no other function, but to make “your time hard. You want to try to do your best time when you’re here, so you can get out and get on with your life.” She

also revealed that intimidation between the inmates develop as, “(...) the older ... [inmates try to manipulate] ... the younger one to do everything. Take the heat. They’ll coax her to do everything.”

Teri, who was serving her first sentence, provided an insightful interview about her prison experience and provided a descriptive knowledge about prison violence and its various forms. At the time of this interview she had been incarcerated the longest of the three women serving their first sentence in a provincial correctional facility. She began her interview by saying that she had not witnessed a lot of violence, but as her interview progressed her examples of prison violence proved contradictory. Teri acknowledged that there was “lots more mental abuse than physical.” Providing various examples of psychological violence between inmates, she concluded her interview by explaining prison life as “(...) a whole different way of life. It is unreal. I don’t even know how to explain it.” She concluded her interview stating that upon entrance into prison, she had interpreted her environment as very violent, but in conjunction with learning the prison and inmate rules of appropriate behaviour, she had become aware of how to minimize potentially violence encounters, and had become desensitized to those outbursts that did occur.

3.1.2: From Psychological to Physical Violence:

Although psychological abuse was most frequently witnessed, experienced, and referred to as a form of abuse, the female inmates most frequently reported and described physical abuse as their experience of violence. Many of the women interviewed differentiated between minor and major physical violence, and labelled most physical assaults between inmates as minor. It is important to acknowledge that how *serious* the female inmates labelled the violence may have been influenced by the woman's personal experience with violence, as well as how much time they had served. In fact, Lynda belittled the assaults between the female inmates, and referred to them as "(...) cat fights. That's two women beating up on each other, and not very seriously." She later added that she had never seen anyone killed or brought to the hospital as a result of violence from another inmate. Interestingly, Sammy stated that she avoids most fights with women unless she knows her opponent can fight. She explained that she did not want to waste her time on physical confrontations with women who were unable to defend themselves. Vicky acknowledged that generally the level of violence was dependent on each woman's temper, her aggressivity, and the precipitating circumstances. Cathie, Suzanne, and Teri theorized that most physically violent encounters were spontaneous and a consequence of, and retaliation to, other forms of violence, such as psychological abuse. Therefore, an inmate may be victimized psychologically, financially, or spiritually, and in the end, also fall victim to physical violence as a result of an argument, brought about by quick tempers, repressed

anger, frustration, or stress expressed in the form of self-defence or as an attempt at conflict resolution.

Physical violence includes “slapping, shoving, hitting, mutilation, stabbing, assault, murder” (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993: 26). However, for the purpose of this study, this definition will also include any self-inflicted physical violence. Sammy warned that the physical violence between the female inmates can get “pretty physical because some of these girls can really fight.” Consequently, the women’s interviews conveyed that they saw forms of physical assault as fist fights, where women get physically assaulted or attacked by another inmate. Therefore, in accordance with Sammy’s interview, the majority of violence is inmate-to-inmate violence.

Specific examples of physical prison violence were provided by the female inmates from the perspective of a witness, victim, and victimizer. The women’s definition of physical assaults expanded to include, pushing, slapping, pulling hair, and biting. Daisy spoke of her prison experience with great sadness and reflected on how psychologically stressful the threat of physical violence is on her. She shared that other inmates had victimized her on several occasions, and described her most recent encounter, where she was accused of theft:

“(…) I don’t steal or anything. And one person said, *‘Well, you stole this.’* I don’t steal. I said to her, *‘I don’t steal. Why are you saying that? I don’t steal. Ask her or*

whatever, but I don't steal. I don't believe in stealing.' She said, "*You fucking mouthy bitch,*" and she took me. Grabbed me by the hair, and got me on the floor. I stood up right away, and she didn't touch me. She hasn't called me a thief (...) [since.]"

Cathie also described the first time a fellow inmate physically assaulted her:

"(...) when I first started doing time in jail. This one girl was sort of the bully of the dorm and she just didn't like me. I don't know why she didn't like me. Because I was well known and everybody liked me, right. And one time I was taking a bath, soaking in the bath and she grabbed me by the hair. It was the first time I got beat up in jail. She grabbed me by the hair and dragged my face along the wall. There was these little picks. (...) My face was just like a road map. She ended up getting in trouble for it, getting put into the '*hole,*' and got transferred out. It scared me."

Only one woman described her experiences as the aggressor in a physical assault. Although Lisa admitted that she had beaten fellow female inmates, she justified her behaviour, stating that she had been provoked by the other inmate. She described a situation where another woman had:

"(...) grabbed the remote control out of my hand. I said, '*Boy, you think you're pretty tough don't you?*' She called me on. '*Come on. Come on.*' Everyone was looking at me, I wasn't going to back down. So of course, she got a beating. That was the first time I went to the '*hole,*' and the first time I really got into a real fight in jail. I don't bother with it, now."

Lisa also described another assault that occurred in a larger metropolitan jail. Lisa stated that another female inmate had stood by the toilet and flushed it in order to muffle the sounds of the assault. She explained that in a large facility the sound of a toilet flushing echos in the dorm and makes it difficult for Correctional Officers to hear any screaming or yelling a victim may make. This inmate's contribution to Lisa's assault reflects the solidarity and cohesion between inmates indicating that inmates are loyal to certain fellow inmates, while not to others.

Although Suzanne a first time inmate in a provincial correctional facility stated that there are no weapons in jail, the more experienced inmates, Vicky and Sammy, reported that they had seen various and unsuspecting objects used as weapons in numerous physical attacks. For example, Vicky was horrifically explicit in her descriptions of physical assaults between female inmates using weapons, such as, mops, butter knives, and forks. From Vicky's interview one may conclude, that in jail, anything can be a potential weapon. Although the weapon may be rudimentary, her interview revealed that these weapons can be nonetheless dangerous. She suggested that prison officials simply try to eliminate the most obvious objects that can be used as a weapon, and she added that weapons are often necessary tools for protection. The idea that anything can be a weapon was indicative in Suzanne's testimony where a radio was used to assault a woman in the head. As previously stated, Vicky identified items such as, mops, coat hangers, forks, butter knives, and hot liquids that were used as weapons between female inmates. This is how Suzanne described

a related experience:

“I saw a girl get pounded right out, on her bed the other day. (...) Somebody mentioned to pour hot coffee in her face, and the girl who hit her said, ‘*No, I can’t do that. This is the way to fight.*’ So, I thought okay. That’s okay. At least she’s not going to do anything dirty. She just wants to make her point. To make her listen to these rules. And that’s the way it is. There’s not going to be dirty fighting going on, that would have been bad. I don’t know what I would have done if she’d been burnt. But I also know that if you try to help, you’re going to be living a miserable life while you’re there. And there’s nothing you can do. It’s that kind of violence. Punching out, mostly. There’s no weapons or anything to use, and from the looks of it, that’s the way it is. Yeah, it’s going to be. If you don’t listen to things. It’s going to be a clean beating. And that’s just the way it is.”

The female inmates also described group assaults, where more than two women assault one woman. Sammy, Cathie, Lynda, Shawna, and Suzanne all suggested that most assaults are unequally balanced, and consist of two or more women attacking one woman. Group assaults were described as a victim being held down by others while she is assaulted. Specific examples of physical violence a group of female inmates on one woman included Sammy’s description of several women cutting up a woman’s face because she is a child molester or rapist. Vicky reported that on several different occasions she had also witnessed two or more inmates assaulting a woman with jail property that included dead weights, milk dispensers, and meal trays.

Another form of physical violence in prison identified by the female participants in this study was the violent actions women directed toward themselves. This definition included suicide and self-injury. Self-mutilation is any physical harm directed toward oneself. Weeks (1992) revealed that the highest incidences of self-directed violence are among women, and concluded that it is a secretive behaviour, repetitive in nature, and performed by multiple methods. Female inmates call self inflicted injuries 'slashing.' Many theorists agree that women self-injure because it is a self expression of control and power, and is an expression of the woman's frustration and anger turned inwards (Eaton, 1993: 51). The woman tries to inflict a greater physical pain as a release to the emotional pain she is experiencing.²³ Limited research²⁴ has been done on female inmates who self-injure, and even less on women incarcerated in provincial facilities. It is important to recognize that the low occurrence of self-mutilation in prisons and the limited research conducted on this topic, reflects the low rates of self-mutilation and research overall.

Suicide is another expression of self-directed violence. The research has suggested that the punitive environment of the correctional facility may even exacerbate or contribute to a woman's predisposition or tendency toward self-imposed violence. Green *et al.*, (1992) reported that suicide is the leading cause of death in prisons in Canada. Weeks (1992) study

²³ See Anne Kershaw and Mary Lasovich's novel. *Rock-a-Bye-Baby: A Death Behind Bars.* ; Kendall, Kathleen. 1994.

²⁴ Kendall, Kathleen. 1994.

also concluded that the rates of inmate suicide are higher than those of the general population. Although the presence of suicidal thoughts does not always lead to suicidal behaviour, research has concluded that the female prison population does pose more of a risk to themselves than their male counterparts. Although prison suicide is generally associated with federally sentenced women, there have been reports of female suicide within provincial facilities.

Several of the female inmates discussed self-directed violence as a form of prison violence. For example, as Lynda identified self-inflicted violence as the most disturbing.

She stated:

“(...) the violent part of prison to me is the violence people are inflicting upon themselves. Like slashing up. (...) I’ve seen a lot of people go to the hospital because they’ve done it to themselves. For some unknown reason. They try to kill themselves and stuff, and that’s pretty violent.”

Shawna also reported that:

“(...) most of the violence, is inflicted upon themselves. They hurt themselves. It’s people that just don’t want to be here. They slice their wrists, or try to *OD* on drugs. Some take other peoples drugs or get drugs in.”

Jean’s interview revealed that inmates are aware of self-directed violence, that ultimately has a psychological affect on other inmates. As Jean explained:

“(...) when I was in ‘*Max*,’ there was a girl who had a Pepsi can and she really looked loonie. I got really scared (...) because of that sharp can. It could hurt anybody. You never know, she could hurt somebody, or herself. You have to watch out.”

Although Teri reported that many of the women talk about killing themselves, and had seen numerous scars on different women’s wrists, she had only witnessed one woman during her period of incarceration who had tried to commit suicide. Several of the females interviewed added that in conjunction with attempting to commit suicide by hanging, with items such as nylon socks, women also spoke of cutting their jugular veins. Sadly, one female inmate in this research project revealed her own suicidal thoughts. She began by describing others actions, but revealed that she had explored thoughts of how women can hurt themselves in the jail. Sammy said:

“(...) I’ve thought of many places that someone could hang themselves. In the bathroom, right over the washroom. There’s this big door with two locks. (...) Tie a sheet over that lock, tie it around your neck and jump off.”

Sammy later threatened:

“(...) I keep coming back and back, but I’m trying this time. ‘Cause I don’t want to come back. Seventeen years is enough. I swear next time I come back, I’ll hurt myself.”

The female participants in this study were acutely aware of women hurting themselves during their incarceration. Cathie stressed that other inmates did not tolerate a woman who:

“(...) hurts or attempts to hurt themselves. The other inmates are right on that. (...) The guards have to be notified when something happens like that. And we always do notify them.”

In fact, it was only under these circumstances that an inmate could inform a correctional officer about another inmates actions without being labelled a ‘*rat.*’ Many of the female inmates discussed visual cues, such as bandages and scars and marks on the women’s arms due of self-inflicted violence which upset them. Teri and Lisa extended their definition of self-directed violence to include anorexic and bulimic behaviour. Both women reported that they had witnessed women binge and ingest large quantities of food and then throw up.

3.1.3: Economical Violence:

Another type of prison violence identified by the female inmates was economic, most frequently expressed in the form of theft. As Shawna shared, stealing or being a thief in prison, could get a woman killed. Sasha warned that the female inmate must be careful because when something goes missing, everyone is suspicious of everyone, and accusations and threats of physical violence are vocalized. The female participants reported that items most frequently stolen in jail consist of items, such as, cigarettes, bras, watches, chocolate bars, and various other products that women order from their canteen.

3.1.4: Racial Violence:

As in a free society, racist attitudes and beliefs continue to thrive, but in this confined environment racist attitudes are more blatantly expressed. Genders and Player (1989) define racial discrimination as any intentional act of treating others unequally and unfavourably, because of their supposed membership to a particular racial group. In Padel and Stevenson's (1988) study, they documented that two-thirds of prisoners in all Correctional Facilities believed that a notable degree of racial prejudice existed amongst the inmate population. The female participants in this study revealed similar opinions, as the interviewees reported that fellow inmates made racist slurs and female inmates identified racial tensions as another form of violence in the correctional facility. However, it was the Inuit and First Nation women who identified it as an almost systematic form of abuse. Of particular significance were the differences in the responses of inmates of different racial origins. Both Inuit women reported experiencing harassment because of their racial identity, while few white and black women reported being subjected to racism.

Spiritual violence includes "degrading one's beliefs, withholding means to practice, (... [and] ...) forcing adherence to a belief system" (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993: 26). The women frequently related spiritual violence to one's race, and reported that it was accompanied by racial slurs. Only two women identified experiencing spiritual violence. However, this probably reflects the small numbers of women

interviewed as well as a small number of women who are involved with religious or spiritual practices in prison. Probably the most potent interview that reflected personal experiences of spiritual abuse was the testimony of the young Inuit woman, Daisy. Early in the interview she conveyed that if:

“(…) you’re a different Nation or you’re not white, you don’t fit in. (…) They pick on me. (…) They call me, ‘*stupid little bitch,*’ ‘*You stupid Eskimo,*”

She felt lonely and ostracized because of her ethnicity, age, size, and her choice of religious beliefs. She shared, that during this period of incarceration, she had become a Born Again Christian, and added that the other women were:

“(…) making fun of Jesus Christ, and that’s pretty hard, because I know it’s real. I’ve experienced it. They’ve been making fun of me and Christianity. Making fun of Christianity. You know, that’s not to be made fun of. That’s a religious thing. It’s pretty disrespectful.”

Sammy also reported that she had experienced spiritual abuse, but consistent with the rest of her interview, she claimed that her experience of spiritual violence was inflicted by the correctional officers.

3.1.5: Sexual Violence:

Sexual violence “includes rape, incest, unwanted sexual touching, date rape, and harassment” (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993: 26). Most of the inmates

reported that sexual violence in jail does not exist. Lynda insisted she had never seen a rape in jail:

“or heard of one. So, if there have been. I missed them. There isn’t any. Women do not get raped. There are too many that don’t mind *not* getting raped.”

In contradiction, Vicky reported that she had:

“(…) seen women forcibly taken. Sexually. Young women that come into jail. Not often. You don’t see that often (…) but I have seen it. Like they’ll wait for the woman to go in the shower, and the way they go. And its usually the bigger more violent, ignorant, ignorant like, ignorant as in, ignorance, no schooling, don’t know nothing but crime.”

Vicky described another form of sexual violence upon a female inmate. Although the motive was of economic nature, the assault was a result of women trying to retrieve a package of drugs that were allegedly being transported in the victim’s vagina. Vicky reported she had witnessed:

“(…) two other women go into (... [a]...) cell with coat hangers, and literally, rip the inside of a woman’s vagina, and everything apart to get the package out of her. And they did. This woman went to the hospital. And needless to say, will no longer have any children and was totally torn up inside.”

She also described a second incident of sexual violence where a woman who had been labelled a *rat*, got “a mop handle shoved up, so far up her ass, you didn’t think it would ever come back.” Although Lisa reported that she had never personally witnessed sexual violence

in prison, she had been told of a prison gang rape. However, Lisa stressed that she doubted any story that described a form of sexual assault in prison, because correctional officers patrolled the prison hallways frequently enough to ensure the women are accounted for, asleep, and in their cell.

3.1.6: Institutional Violence:

Another form of violence identified by the female inmates was institutional violence. It is important to note that institutional violence, as defined by the women in this study goes beyond the definition and explanation of the importation or deprivation model, because the prison environment is designed to discipline and control inmate behaviour. For this study, institutional violence was defined as infractions that the inmates deemed as institutional injustices due to mistreatment by Correctional staff or because of the prison regime itself. In agreement with the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women (1993), institutions must not be perceived as neutral settings that treat or are experienced by everyone uniformly. In support of this claim, Cathie reported that the guards did not cause prison violence, however, other inmates described the mistreatment or neglect of inmates by correctional employees as a form of violence. In addition, the restrictive routines of the prison was frequently cited as a contributing factor to institutional violence. For example, Sasha described her experience of the prison regime as being “treated like a bunch of dogs in a cage. They take

you out like we have to go pee or something. Back in.” Sasha concluded that there was a lack of respect, professional, and safe care provided by the correctional employees. She stated that since her incarceration, no one had even acknowledged her requests to see a counsellor. Sasha, Sammy, and Vicky also criticized the correctional officers more directly stating that the officers do not care about the inmates. The three women also identified the lack of recreational activities as a reflection of the staff’s disinterest in the inmates. Sasha believed the correctional officers deliberately withheld rightful privileges of recreational activities from the female inmates, stating that the guards:

“(…) only give us yard whenever they feel like giving it to us. It is supposed to be an hour that we have yard and the last couple of while there. It’s only been 20 - 25 minutes yard. It’s just sickening. We should have yard every day. And if it’s raining they should come and say ‘the people who want to go out in the rain, ‘go.’ People who don’t ‘stay.’ They don’t even come and do that.”

Sasha added, that the women had also been denied access to the weight room as a substitute for the short yard time. Confused by the situation, Vicky explained that the inmates’ desperate need for yard is because yard provides an opportunity to have some time away from each another. Sammy and Sasha criticised the quality of the jail food and agreed that it was unsafe, unhealthy, and unedible. Sasha reported that since her arrival the female inmates had found the finger of a glove cut off in a pizza, had been served raw food, green meat, and the tip of a pencil had been broken off and put inside an apple. Sammy was

undoubtedly the most critical about the prison and its routine, concluding that in comparison to other prisons she had served sentences in, *'Institution A'* was the worst. In fact, most of Sammy's interview addressed issues of institutional violence, and described correctional staff as its reinforcers. She reported that the guards deem inmates as worthless. Sammy also criticized the jail medical staff:

“(...) wait until you're half dead before they do anything for you. Or stick you with a bunch of Tylenol to shut your mouth. *'Here take a couple of Tylenol. You'll be okay.'* You gotta get four other girls to get some for you 'cause you have a migraine. You want to see the doctor. It will take three weeks. A dentist. It will take you six months before you see a dentist. So like, the medical is no good.”

Sammy also reported in some facilities the female inmates were over medicated with sedatives. She suggested that the women were over medicated, in order to calm them down. The last form of institutional violence identified by a female participant was begin subjected to strip searches. Sammy was the only interviewee that depicted being subjected to weekly strip searches that included a body cavity search by female correctional officers, while male officers searched the dormitory, in her definition of prison violence.

A few of the women from *'Institution B'* extended their definition of institutional violence to also include how the behaviour of fellow inmates affect them, the damage of prison property, and female inmates who harass and taunt the male guards. Alice defined

institutional violence as a consequence of the women's lack of conformity to institutional policy. For example, she identified the segregation unit and the militaristic procedures of the institutional swat team as institutional forms of violence inflicted upon the women. Jean described a series of events where a woman who had been put into the segregation unit, deeply affected her because the cell was right beneath hers. Jean stated that:

“(...) the guards locked her up and put her in the hole. She was crying and yelling all night. It kept me up for two nights. It was terrible. (...) I asked the nurse to give me a sleeping pill. I got scared. I was shaking in my bed, I couldn't sleep the whole night, having that underneath me. The hole is underneath where I slept. It scared me. Hearing her yell and scream. I thought they were torturing her it was so bad.”

Despite the women's obvious differences in prison experiences, Jean, a first timer in jail, and Shawna, a seasoned veteran in Canadian jails, were both affected by the emotional state of other women in their environment. Jean indicated that witnessing violence between other women is upsetting. Shawna expressed that she experienced the same difficulty. She reported feeling empathy for many of the female inmates. Teri, an observant young woman, shared some additional forms of institutional violence that included damage to computers which were prison property. Interestingly, Shawna attributed institutional violence as an experience that was the result of female inmates' trying to manipulate prison rules. For example, she reported that all inmates learn that requests are to be made only at service time.

Nevertheless, some women will ask anytime, and when the correctional officers decline their request, the inmates get angry and will often insult the officers, hence creating an incident.

In conclusion, the female participants in this study identified similar types of violence as those women interviewed in the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women study. These patterns revealed that the types of violence women experience in society are more similar to those types of violence that women experience in prison, than they are different. The only difference being that in society women experience violence at the hands of men and in jail inmates experience violence at the hands of other female inmates. As the female participants reported, these types of victimization include physical, spiritual, psychological, economical, and sexual abuse. The interviewees of this study confirm that for many women, the prevalence of daily violence does not end upon incarceration, and that violence does not only occur at the hands of men. In contradiction, this study confirms that violence exists between female inmates in Canadian provincial correctional facilities.

Section 3.2: Explanations for Prison Violence:

“It’s a certain way of living here. And it’s not like any kind of life you’ll ever know, unless you get sentenced to come and stay here. (...) It’s hard to explain to someone else. You almost have to experience it

yourself to really comprehend what you're talking about. It's something you'll never see again. Ever. The experience you'll have in here. What you'll see in here. You'll only see in here."

(Suzanne, interviewee).

The female participants provided many explanations for prison violence. However, the interviews revealed two patterns of explanations that can be linked to the theoretical models used in this thesis. The first pattern revealed that characteristics associated with the importation model, such as, individual personality traits, external stressors, issues of respect, jealousy, attention, violence as a result of unresolved issues between inmates prior to their incarceration. The second explanation of prison violence was linked to issues associated with the deprivation models, such as, the prison and inmate rules.

The majority of the female participants expressed attitudes of indifference towards their fellow inmates, and the types of relationships they had with the other female inmates.

Lynda captured the women's feelings when she commented that:

"(...) a few people in there don't like me. I don't like a few of them either. We didn't come here to get brownie points, and I didn't come here to (...) get friends or influence people. I just came here to do this little minute and go. And I'll be glad when I'm gone."

Several women made attempts to explain prison violence through psychological terms. Teri theorized that the violent women were “fighting more with what’s in their head than anything.” Daisy had similar interpretations and explained that violent behaviour is a form of psychological release. Suzanne summarized the women’s comments when she stated that violent behaviour is the way female inmates express tension and deal with almost every situation. She concluded that:

“(…) the easiest, quickest way to do things is to threaten violence. Things are done quicker that way. It won’t go on and on. You’ll get rid of this problem faster, if you use violence. (...) There’s no sitting down and talking about things. It’s this or that. Or get beat up. That’s just the way it is.”

Teri explained that stronger inmates look for weaknesses in the women they dislike, and detect when a woman is nervous. They realize that by approaching her physically or verbally in a certain way, they can intimidate her into doing just about anything. By neglect, preying, scaring, intimidating, and manipulating the more vulnerable women, the victimizer exercises her attempts at dominance, power, and control over fellow inmates.

3.1.1: Explanations Supporting the Importation Model:

Many women suggested that the most common explanation for violence between the female inmates, responsible for violence between women who are not in prison; simple conflicts in personality. This means that the women simply do not get along based on

personality clashes. Some inmates attributed personality conflicts between inmates due to the women's age, explaining that younger women tend to be wilder or withdrawing from drugs. Therefore, they are more prone to act violently during their period of incarceration. Alice reported that younger women often tease each other and become involved in power struggles trying to be the leader. Teri suggested that the younger women think that violence is:

“(...) cool and thinks that for the older girls to like her, she's got to be that way too. She's got to have had her share of violence and drugs, and her old time stories, too.”

Alice also suggested that for other women, violence was interpreted as a normal part of their lives and viewed as the simplest way to handle the problem.

Other attributes from the importation model used to explain prison violence, was that violence was a result of direct provocation and one's loss of control. Many inmates agreed that violence in jail was unpredictable, spontaneous, and could result from any interaction including petty or banal things. Teri observed a violent episode that stemmed from the misinterpretation of an intended joke. Vicky reported witnessing a spontaneous assault which was later discovered as a case of mistaken identity. As Cathie concluded, inmates quickly learn that any woman could spontaneously '*snap*' at any time, often without any apparent reason or provocation. Issues that sparked violent interactions included conflicts

over the television, what program to watch, use of the telephone, showers, washing machine, and food.

The female inmates also attributed much of the prison violence to the tension experienced by each woman's own personal stressors. In conjunction, with several studies,²⁵ personal stressors such as, worrying about children, family, flashbacks of abuse, were identified stressors reported by the women in this study. Female inmates internalize these experiences and they become "socially induced anxieties (... [that can] ...) take on several forms, one of the most significant being institutional attacks" (Mann, 1967: 44). Sbarbaro theorizes that in prison "whole dimensions of the person are denied, family and culture are marginalised, and interests and skills become irrelevant, everything is dichotomized" (Sbarbaro, 1995: 98). As a result, institutional and individual stressors, such as feelings of loneliness and alienation from the outside social world, family, and friends, can contribute to an inmate's stress level and explain some women's behaviour.

Female prisoners experience a variety of external stressors during their period of incarceration. General stressors such as, extended sentences, their bills, their property, and their houses are examples of internal and external conflicts. Shawna explained that some women lose everything when they are sent to jail, and will have to rebuild their lives when they are released. She admitted that she experienced less stress during her incarceration,

²⁵ See Smith *et. al.*. 1994. : MacLeod. 1986. : Birkenmayer and Jolly. 1981.

knowing somebody is taking care of her responsibilities, such as her children and bills. As mentioned by several of the female inmates, they experience less stress when they know their children are in a safe environment and are able to remain in contact with them.

A few of the women reported that some prison violence is caused by unresolved conflicts originating from the street. Suzanne described a physical assault where she saw:

“(...) a radio smashed on a girl’s head. That was one that got out of hand, and it was not nice to look at either. But that was a private fight, it had nothing to do with the rules here.”

Lisa reported that inmate’s including herself, are frequently confronted with acquaintances from the street with whom they have unresolved issues. Confinement together causes emotions to intensify and one’s physical presence serves as a constant reminder not allowing inmates to easily forget a previous ordeal.

3.1.2: Explanations Supporting the Deprivation Model:

Directly linked to the deprivation model, several women indicated that prison violence was attributed to and explained as being a part of the ‘prison mentality.’ One example, of this came from Suzanne, a first timer, who observed that the inmates resolve issues violently and explained that violence is “(...) the mentality here. They seem to only deal

with things on violence. The final act is violence.” Alice explained prison violence as being the result of a ‘type of mentality’:

“Violence is their way of life. (...) Everything is so warped here. It’s not your ordinary life.”

Prison violence can be explained as a result of tension between female inmates due to issues of respect, attention, jealousy, and control. Struggles for respect occur as women try to attain, maintain, and accord respect concurrently. As Vicky explained the importance of respect, she justified her violent actions, by saying that when someone is:

“(...) rude to me, I’ll get rude right back, but not enough that I’ll go to the ‘hole.’ ... The same tone he / she is using on me will be back on them, and I will lose all respect for that person. If I am treated with respect I will respect ... [them].”

Survival in this hostile environment becomes dependant on learning the acceptable and respectable forms of behaviour. Therefore, when one is disrespectful towards fellow inmates, the disrespect becomes a justification for violent behaviour. Alice suggested that this sense of being respected by others makes the female inmates feel important, and undoubtedly elevates the woman’s sense of self worth. In an environment where one’s sense of self has been stripped and replaced by the negative qualities, one’s sense of self worth becomes defined by external factors which are of the utmost importance. This means that one’s self-worth becomes dependent on the perceptions of one’s peers. Teri explained that

the interpretation of disrespect can be as subtle as looking at someone in what they interpret as a wrong look, which leads to agitation and then a violent reaction. Other inmates struggle to maintain loyalties to their fellow inmates, while sharing enough information with administration to attain privileges.

Personality conflicts were also attributed to jealousy based on issues such as a woman's sentence length or the relationships between the female inmates. Although most of the women interviewed had accepted and adjusted to their sentence length, many expressed feelings of aggravation toward women caught up in the revolving door of the provincial jail system. For example, Sammy described her frustration, stating that:

“(...) when you've been here nine months, still waiting to go to court (... [and other women are saying] ...) *'I'm getting out. I'm getting out.'* *'Well, don't talk about it. I don't want to hear about it. Good for you.'* I'm seeing girls coming in like six times since I've been there. In and out. In and out. In and out. Same thing. *'Shut up, fuck.'* You just want to hit them.”

Teri added that women experience a lot of stress when they expect to be released on a particular date and then new charges are laid resulting in a prolonged sentence. Therefore, it was no surprise when several women reported that inmates serving longer sentences are often jealous of women serving shorter sentences. Alysyn explained women serving longer sentences interpret prison conflicts and issues more seriously, because their lives are consumed with what is going on inside the jail.

Another prison stressor identified in the literature and mentioned by several women in this study as an explanation for prison violence was the deprivation of heterosexual relationships. Although there is a forced abstinence of heterosexual contact, there is also a deprivation of platonic heterosexual contact because of the social, political, and institutional initiative to have predominantly all female Correctional staff work with incarcerated women. This initiative is a response to reduce the female inmates' sense of powerlessness at the hands of male Correctional Officers. However, it also creates an abnormal living environment. An environment that eliminates males from the most general tasks that include minimal contact with the female inmates creates an artificial reality. Female inmates need to establish healthy relationships with men, and we theorize that a positive step in this direction, must begin during their confinement in prison.

Within a Correctional facility the reaffirmation of any personal sense of goodness and worthiness is challenging. In fact, Carlen (1988) theorizes that most female inmates experience some sense of *nothingness* throughout their correctional sentence. Some female inmates fill the void through homosexual relationships. Hence, it is important to recognize that homosexual relationships would develop despite the prison environment, and that prison conditions cannot be viewed as the cause of increased homosexual behaviour, but as a temporary adaptive behaviour. Donaldson (1990) suggests that there may be some peer pressure in some correctional facilities to engage in homosexual activity because it validates the homosexual behaviour of others. The development of any intimate relationship goes in

contradiction to prison rules. Involvement in any sexual activity is a direct act of rebellion against the institution and an example of the institution's failure to control inmate behaviour.

Sammy believed that some female inmates were jealous of her lesbian relationship, and made repeated attempts to cause conflicts and break the women up. Cathie reported that a lot of the prison tension was the result of jealous lovers. She theorized that:

“(...) when two females fall in love with each other emotionally, it screws them up. You can feel the tension in the jails, cells, like where we are. And when the two girls are fighting, if they're going together. You can feel the tension. 'Cause they argue, and they scream, and they yell, you know. I put up with that on the street. Shut-up and take it somewhere else. So, you know. I think that's a type of violence, In a way, because you never know if they're going to kill each other, and whoever gets in the path. One girl (...) offered me a chocolate bar, for someone interfering in her relationship to beat her up. So, there's violence in that too.”

Narcotics have had a significant impact on contemporary society, and their influence has extended and permeated the prison system. Women are incarcerated for various drug offences and as reported by many of the participants, it continues to control and affect their lives as inmates. For example, many women enter the provincial system under its influence and eventually suffer from withdrawal symptoms. Female inmates showing signs of being high, intoxicated, or suffering from withdrawal, are placed in segregation units to prevent disturbing and upsetting other inmates. However, as indicated by Jean's interview, isolation may not be an effective method to reduce prison tension, and may even contribute to the

increase of it. Some women explained that specific topics of conversation induced stress and violence among the inmates. The topic of drugs and the use of drugs were examples of stressful topics. Vicky reported that when some women enter jail still high from drugs and become psychologically unstable when they experience withdrawal. Other women reported that conversations become stressful because there is a lack of activities to keep the women busy. The female participants reported that conversations are frequently repetitive, and centre on what the women have experienced on the outside, and more often than not, focus on past experiences of sexual abuse, drug use and other violent behaviour. To the woman who uses drugs on the street, this may be frustrating and act as a stressful temptation, increasing the urge to consume again, as well as, become aggravated by the lack of productive conversation alternatives.

Female participants also reported that violence between female inmates also sparks from the type of crime the woman is believed to have committed. As Teri explained:

“(...) the crime that you’re in here for influences how the other inmates treat you. (... [and] ...) depending on what you do or what you’ve done, can really bring the heat on you.”

This statement becomes distinctly clear when it comes to crimes perpetrated against children and informants. The women provided examples of harassment, torment, and physical assaults against these women, when they are placed in general population units. The female participants also reflected the inmate code’s of zero tolerance for these offenders; zero tolerance that justified violent attacks. Vicky and Sammy both described one of the most

popular methods of teaching someone a lesson, while solidifying conformity to the inmate group: women would throw blankets over the victim's face, so she could not see, and while she was being held down, other inmates would take turns assaulting the victim with socks stuffed with bars of soap.

Several women interviewed in this study speculated that mixing the inmate population caused prison violence. Lynda commented that tensions rose from putting mentally ill women in jail with criminals. Sammy reflected a similar point of view stating that the correctional system "(...) puts crazy people with us. They should be in a crazy mental hospital, not in jail with us. We're not all crazy. We're bad." Alysyn explained that the unsuccessful mixing of the inmate population caused violence because women serving long sentences were incarcerated with women serving shorter sentences. She described women who are serving short sentences as doing simple time, thus they experience less stress and interpret their prison experiences as less serious because they are aware that their prison term is short. Alysyn later added that small timers frequently laugh at and make fun of the women serving longer sentences, and admitted that this behaviour serves to contribute to other women's pressure, and that this pressure is what causes most of the violence in prison.

The women's lack of privacy and their need for more space, as well as, privacy were the environmental stressors most commonly identified by the female inmates as an explanation for prison violence. Unlike in free society, inmates are unable to avoid each

other successfully because the prison structure does not enable or permit it. Teri and Jean expressed their frustration from being with the same women every day. Teri described that she, like most inmates, have days that are simply unbearable because the women become:

“(...) sick of the faces that you’re seeing everyday. You’re sick of the whole routine. You’re sick to your stomach being here, and the thought that goes through your mind is that you ‘still got to be here for a while.’ I think that’s what causes people to be moody and frustrated.”

Vicky also attributed prison violence to being confined in the dormitory most of the day.

Alice explained the women’s tolerance level accurately when she stated:

“(...) I find even with myself. I have a pretty good level of patience., but I find in prison, I don’t have as much patience as I do outside. Maybe it’s because everybody is in everybody’s pocket. There’s no escaping one another.”

The female inmates also attributed prison violence to the pains of imprisonment. These pains of imprisonment were defined as difficulties caused simply by being in prison. For example, Vicky remarked that in *‘Institution A’* inmates ate all their meals with spoons. She explained that it was not only difficult to eat but it made her feel like a child. Sammy identified the lack of privacy between inmates and correctional staff when in the shower.

One inmate suggested that prison violence was caused by correctional officers and staff. However, like most of her interview, Sammy attributed most negative experiences as instigated by correctional staff. She stated that guards discourage and ignore the women, and

justified inmate riots as reactive behaviours to their treatment, by the correctional officers.

She theorized that inmates rebel because:

“(...) they get sick and fed up with people not coming to their needs. Jail is supposed to be there for you. Even though we’re locked up. We’re still people.”

Sammy’s interview reflected her non-acceptance of any responsibility in most situations, including her crimes or the prison tension. Her comments suggested that she believed the jail staff were deliberately against her, on a personal, emotional, and legal level.

In conclusion, the female participants in this study provided various explanations for prison violence. These explanations were related to factors that support both the importation model and the deprivation model as the theoretical explanations for female prison violence in a provincial jail. The female participants in this study supported the importation theory by identifying the women’s psychological experiences, drug usage before incarceration, and their previous conflicts with inmates prior to incarceration as influential factors that contribute to violence between female inmates. However, the interviews also supported the theory of deprivation as the women identified issues that resulted from their environment, such as deprivation of freedom, mixing of inmates, the lack of privacy, the choice / limitations of topics of conversations, consequences for the types of crimes an inmate has committed, and the varied personal stressors that result from being incarcerated.

Section 3.3: Consequences of Prison Violence:

“Being violent and being in jail, is more dangerous. It’s more serious. ‘Cause you can stay here more. It’s really hard (...) to not be violent.”

(Jaycee, interviewee.).

This section will analyse the consequences of prison violence between provincially sentenced women, as explained by the women themselves. It is important to emphasize that three of the fifteen women were serving their first sentence, and at the time of the interview had been incarcerated for a short period of time. This section will examine both the physical and psychological affects of prison violence amongst women.

In discussing the consequences of prison violence the women revealed three distinctive consequences which befell those women participated in violence during their incarceration. The women outlined issues that fell into the categories of psychological, physical, and correctional consequences. The women emphasized how under most circumstances they, the inmates made a conscious and deliberate effort to avoid violent situations.

The inmate subculture is unique in various aspects of its composition, but similar to free-contemporary society because each revolves around regulations that enforce structural and procedural policies. Contrary to the stereotype of the ‘aggressive female inmate’ the

interviews revealed that the majority of women on a conscious level make great efforts to maintain a violence-free environment and conflict resolution remains a priority. The interviews reflected that the women constantly monitor each other's behaviour. For example, Shawna stated that the female inmates will often warn each other before and during an altercation, by saying things like: “*‘come on girls, break it up, it ain't worth it, ’*” and stressing how the women's conflict is not worth prison's punishment. Shawna added that women will act pro-actively and “(...) try to minimize potentially tense situations” by establishing and maintaining rules, such as voting on shared privileges, such as the use of the television, telephone, showers, washing machines, seating arrangements, and food. Consequently, the threat of physical violence may shape, direct, and control the women's behaviour, but the actual rate of physical attacks remain comparatively low. However, women continue to live in a tumultuous environment and under the threat of psychological, physical, and correctional consequences for violent behaviour.

3.3.1: The Psychological Consequences of Prison Violence:

The psychological consequences experienced by women due to violence or the threat of violence in jail, include intense levels of fear, anger, sense of helplessness, isolation, withdrawal from the environment, avoidance behaviour, a state of personal resignation, or psychological detachment, a self-monitoring or regulation of behaviour, and the development of alternative coping mechanisms such as offensive versus defensive behaviour.

A high level of fear was the most common psychological consequence of prison violence experienced by the women. The female inmates feared being victimized and being forced to protect themselves. Cathie, Sasha, Shawna, and Teri reported experiencing high levels of fear when they first came into jail, but admitted to having adapted to the prison environment, and that the sense of immediate danger had faded and was replaced by a preoccupation for precautionary behaviour, such as not getting involved or trying to avoid trouble. For example, Jean, a first offender, conveyed the high levels of stress and fear that she experienced in prison on a daily basis as a result of witnessing or experiencing psychological abuse at the hands of fellow inmates. Her high levels of anxiety and fear are reflected in her statement, that when:

“somebody tells me to ‘*shut up*’ or ‘*don’t talk*’ or ‘*mind your own business*,’ if they talk to me like that, I won’t even answer them back. I’m not a violent person. I’m too scared, they might hit me or something, you never know.”

Sasha also revealed her preoccupation with prison violence. She explained that:

“(…) violence in prison, is really bad. You can’t do nothing without watching your back.[...(because)...] You don’t know if someone is going to jump you or not.

Teri described: “prison tension like a blanket in the air,” and supported Sasha, Suzanne, Daisy, and Shawna’s interviews which emphasized that the inability to predict an inmate’s behaviour contributed to the women’s feelings of fear and nervousness. As Daisy explained, inmates begin to experience an enhanced sense of paranoia as they “begin walking on egg

shells. Thinking everyone is going to punch you out, all at once.” Finally, as a result of this fear that permeates the everyday jail environment and in inmates expressing gratitude that “after another day is done. I say, *Thank God, I’ve made it fine ‘till this day.’* Day by day. Day by day” (Suzanne).

Another important psychological consequence of prison violence experienced by the female inmates was the sense of helplessness. Although women were often witnesses to violent situations involving other inmates, they reported being unable to intervene. This sense of helpless observation served to intensify the women’s feelings of vulnerability. As Suzanne explained that when she witnessed inmate violence, she felt:

“(…) helpless ‘cause I can’t. Now, if I saw somebody on the street being hurt. It would be my immediate reaction to help them. I feel the same way in here, but you can not help them. That’s why I have a helpless feeling. You can’t help them. You have to turn the other way and forget what’s going on, and that’s not always that easy to do. It’s stressful.”

Jean also expressed her sense of helplessness because she was unable to intervene. Jean reported that she hears women:

“(…) cry all the time. Some girls that come in here will cry constantly. It makes me feel bad. You want to go up and ask them, but then you don’t want to, because I don’t really want to know. I don’t want to get involved. You can’t get involved.”

Vicky and Shawna expressed empathy for other women's circumstances, as they described how the emotional turmoil of a fellow inmate affects the other women. Both emphasized their attempts to stay out of other people's personal business, but how the problems of others eventually affects everyone. Shawna explained that this adoption of other inmates' emotional stress develops with time, and because the women are together for long periods, relationships develop and the inmates become a pseudo-family. Therefore the problems and stressors of one inmate can have a secondary affect on one or all of the inmates.

Female inmates also reported an increase of stress within the jail because of violence. The women reported that although the violence frightened and stressed them, it was also their only source of excitement. Alice commented that she wanted to know everything that was going on, because it was something to do. Agreeing that there was already a high level of tension in the jail, Shawna explained that when women argue or fight these confrontations only add to the tension. Teri explained that when she first arrived in jail, she woke up every hour during the night, and was also unable to sleep during the day. Jean and Sasha agreed that they experienced physical and psychological trauma due to the violence they witnessed.

Several women reported experiencing stress when fellow inmates self-injure or attempt suicide. Jaycee shared that when fellow inmates injure themselves it reminds her of what she:

“(...) tried too, before. It feels more stronger not to do it. I feel more depressed. Depressed, I start to think, *‘Oh my god, how could they do that. It’s not worth it.’* I’ve been there. I’ve done that. It’s not working at all. God makes us alive. God makes us special people. He makes us try to help each other (...) But we’re all fucked up, you know.”

This statement demonstrates how aggression and violent behaviour in prison affects most inmates psychologically and emotionally, to some degree. However, there were a few women who did not label their prison experience as stressful, which concurrently reflected their degree of institutionalization. As Jaycee admitted: “I’ve been in prison since I was 18. It’s kinda hard for me to get away from that place. A prison. Being a prisoner.” Shawna drew parallels between jail life and life in society indicating that survival tactics in both are similar. Alice suggested that women who did not find prison life stressful and who adapted to prison life quickly, simply were already institutionalized or reflective of her inability to cope as an adult. Two women in this study did not find prison life stressful. Alysyn described prison as:

“(...) a heaven. You get a pool in the back. You get your meals to you, They put you to bed at night. So, you don’t have to lock your door. They open the door, they tell you when it’s breakfast. It’s a heaven. You can have anything you want on request.”

However, Lisa had a more realistic interpretation, although her answer indicated that to some degree she was institutionalized. Lisa described her time in prison as her:

“(…) vacation time. (…) Not that I want to come to jail, but it’s the only time I have to relax. To be myself. On the streets, I know lots of people who want me to do this. Want me to do that. And then I’ve got enemies I don’t watch my back, though. I’ve got enough friends. Not friends, but associates. You know. When I come to jail. It’s like. Ah, I can relax now.”

Other psychological consequences of prison violence expressed by the female participants, was the conscious decision to withdraw, avoid, or isolate oneself from their environment and specifically from social interactions. Women’s strategies of isolation and withdrawal seem to differ from one correctional facility to another. The women’s physical action of isolation, withdrawal, or avoidance from their environment is symbolic of their reluctance and lack of willingness to be emotionally involved with their surroundings, hence lowering conflict risks. For example, in *‘Institution A,’* the dormitory style living conditions restricted the ability to isolate oneself, and women did this by laying in their bed all day, staying in their own corners, and sleeping or reading. In attempts to escape into solitude, Vicky reported, when she becomes:

“(…) frustrated, I work out. I do my push ups. (…) if we miss weights I have three or four showers a day. I go and sit there because they’re hot. The showers are nice and hot and the water comes out really hard. And I’ll just sit there in a shower just to unwind.”

Alice explained that she spends a lot of her time reading, because it allows her to ignore and shut out the prison stressors and environment. In *‘Institution B,’* each woman had her own

cell with only a few common areas, such as the television room, showers, and cafeteria. Shawna, Jaycee, and Alysyn chose to work, while others, such as, Jean and Lisa attended school to avoid staying with the same women from their sector for the majority of the day. Many women from '*Institution B*,' reported that when a situation involving other inmates did develop, many women stated that they get up and leave the room. Others suggested that they retreat to the solitude of their cells or beds. Shawna reported that a woman can do her time pretty well, if she has her own television in her cell, because it keeps her out of the sector. Jaycee, for her part, was more pro-active in her attempts to avoid problems, as she deliberately avoided the women she was not on good terms with. However, as one woman commented, withdrawing and isolating oneself is an attempt to avoid potentially violent situations, that result in loneliness. For Jean, her loneliness was a result of ensuring her physical safety by withdrawal.

Some women dealt with prison violence by psychologically detaching themselves from their environment. These women revealed that they had accepted the fact that violence and the threat of it, are and will continue to be a part of the jail subculture. As Suzanne shared: "there will always be that code of life you have to live by, in here. That violence threatening you all the time." This state of resignation seems to develop as an inmate realizes that she cannot change, influence, involve herself in the interactions of others, despite how trivial a situation may be. Symptoms of this sense of resigned helplessness and detachment expressed by Alice, Jean, Suzanne and Teri included not getting involved, or ignoring, or

walking away from violent episodes. Overall, most participants verbalized indifference about their feelings toward the other incarcerated women. Lynda expressed it best when she stated: "I'm only here for a minute. I don't really care. I don't care what they do. They can do what ever they want." The lack of solidarity between the women is part of the logic of incarceration. Jean believed that none of the inmates cared about anyone else, and described the women as very hard. Lynda also criticized the lack of comradery between the inmates. However, Shawna and Alysyn expressed their sense of resignation by interpreting every experience with indifference and humour. Shawna emphasized that trying to stay in a good mood was essential because otherwise, jail would make a person crazy, while other women develop tough images. Some women attempt to diffuse tension using their own unique approach on how to portray a tough image to fellow inmates, hence allowing them to walk away, untouched. Several adopted a pro-active approach in attempts to diffuse potential situations, where the women would voice their aggressive intentions towards other women indicating their preparedness to physically defend themselves in any situation. These women believed that this aggressive behaviour prevented further escalation of the problem. These pro-active women had also all served numerous sentences in different institutions and were between 28 and 34 years of age. For example, Sammy described her assertive behaviour:

"(...) if there's a problem, I know how to handle myself. So, I don't let problems happen. Before the problem starts I'll say something. *'Get out of my face.'* *'Go in the other corner.'* *'Don't bother me.'* It usually works for me."

Lisa emphasised the importance of maintaining control of the situation and not letting emotions control her actions. She reported that during this sentence she had not fought with anyone, but had adopted a tough image confronting a few people, telling them: *'I don't fuckin' like you and if you don't like me, I don't care. Don't get in my face.'* Lastly, Vicky spoke about a recent tense exchange of words, she sensed negative glances from a fellow inmate. She immediately confronted her and demanded she address the problem immediately. The women spoke and resolved the issue verbally. By confronting a situation or inmate, the initiating inmate controls the interaction, and appears ready, strong, and physically willing to defend herself and her position, thus eliminating any perception that she may be vulnerable or weak to psychological or physical abuse, while evoking fear and respect from her peers. Subsequently, an inmate's image of being tough and potentially dangerous, decreases future susceptibility of being victimized by other inmates.

3.3.2: The Physical Consequences of Prison Violence:

Although attempts to avoid confrontations are most common practised, they are not always successful, nor do they all end in physical assault. In fact, several inmates were unable to explain how inmate issues were resolved. Jaycee explained that she was unsure beyond the fact that they just stop talking to each other, and say, *'I don't want to talk with you,'* *'leave me alone.'* and they walk away. Alice stressed that despite numerous threats amongst female inmates, the women are rarely physically violent because they fear

punishment. Therefore, in an attempt to alleviate the stress, and avoid physical confrontations, potential physical pain, and institutional punishment, women apologize to one another.

Victimized inmates endure their physical pain alone and in silence. When fellow inmates do discover that something has transpired between two or more other inmates and ask what has happened, the response is generally a minimization of events and dismissal of the conversation, pretending that nothing has happened. Suzanne reported that during an assault other inmates do not intervene, they look away, and say nothing because of fear of involvement or the fear of repercussions. Inmates quickly learn that one does not repeat a story because it may be interpreted as minding your own business or gossip, therefore punishable by her peers. Although the female inmates generally take care of themselves, when their pain is too great, inmates will lie to nurses about the origins of the pain, cuts, or bruises and report them as either self-inflicted or caused by accidents, such as slipping or running into something. However if an inmate does file a report and involves another inmate, this action is defined as '*ratting*.' This label deems her untrustworthy and a traitor to fellow inmates and can result in further assaults. '*Ratting*' to correctional officers about another inmate can result in the '*rat*' being reassigned to the segregation unit, and the aggressor receiving additional time being added to their sentence. To the inmate who reported the incident, the label of '*rat*' is applied which often follows the inmate throughout

her institutional career. This label is one that inmates try to avoid because of its negative consequences, such as being isolated from other inmates.

However, the final consequence of prison violence for the female inmates was the physical formation, maintenance, and strengthening of '*cliques*.' From the original fifteen women interviewed, six of them, Cathie, Lynda, Sasha, Jean, Lisa, Shawna, discussed the existence of cliques. Inmates defined cliques as small groups or collections of specific women on a regular basis. The interviews reflected some interesting patterns, but ultimately concluded that inmates in cliques are easily influenced and/or manipulated by their peers and the women adopt, respond, and act on the emotions of their collective identity.

When the women from '*Institution A*,' discussed cliques they highlighted the function and purpose that the clique served for the inmate. The women in '*Institution A*,' were housed in a dormitory style room and only left the dormitory for recreational activities. The environment may have been influential in determining how the development of cliques evolved. In the utmost simplistic terms, Sasha defined women as being either members of the good group or the bad group. When questioned about how one qualifies as a member of either group, she responded that "(...) it depends on who she starts talking to first. If she talks to the bad group, we know the bad group will brainwash her. So, she'll stay there." Cathie's interview revealed that she believed the purpose of a clique is primarily for protection. She stated:

“(...) a lot of girls in there stick around me, and whoever is around me will not get picked on. No one will pick on them. I don’t know why, they just don’t. I don’t consider myself a bully of the dorm, but everyone knows they won’t mess with me because I won’t put up with it.”

Lynda believed that the women hang around in cliques for power. This statement suggests the inmate’s belief that they need power, protection, and emphasizes the need to differentiate between ‘*them*’ and ‘*us*’ as physically separate identities and groups. The women accomplished this by physically segregating themselves and also by having limited interaction and communication between the cliques. As Sasha’s statement reflected: “they don’t talk to us. We don’t talk to them.”

In ‘*Institution B*’ the women were assigned individual cells in different sectors. Although Shawna commented that the officers involved in the process of classification were actually good at classifying the women into sectors, the remaining interviewees revealed how this categorization process determined clique membership. For example, Lisa and Jean both identified that a woman’s language can determine clique membership. As an Anglophone woman, Jean’s interview reflected how isolated and alone she felt because of her language. She commented that: “the French girls hang out in groups together, and if you ask them anything they don’t answer you.” Lisa also criticized the lack of communication between the English and French cliques in ‘*Institution B*.’ She believed that the French women understood English but because of their prejudice, chose not to respond. The

references to the division of women by language in '*Institution B*,' reflects the tense political division that exists in some sectors of Quebec society. However, it is likely that the guidelines that divide some, concurrently act as commonalities that bring others together. Lisa added that a woman's sexual orientation will also determine what clique she belongs to. Several women reported that many women become involved in lesbian relationships during their sentence. The formation of homosexual couples may be a coping mechanism that inmates adopt to adapt to the prison environment and is an important human behaviour to learn from. As Teri explained "a lot of girls turn gay. A lot of girls. To me. They're just looking for attention. They weren't on the outside. They're gay inside. They won't be when they get outside." Alysyn and Shawna mentioned that the jail also divided the women's sentence length and whether the inmates work. Hence, clique formation was based on numerous and various characteristics. Two of the fourteen women interviewed also discussed the consequences of women who self-injure or attempt suicide. Lynda admitted that she had witnessed a lot of women go to the hospital. She expressed that not only were the self-inflicted wounds serious for the women, but knowing these women had purposely hurt themselves was psychologically traumatic for other women. Shawna expressed feelings of grief and psychological trauma at seeing women bandaged up from hurting themselves. Other women attributed the violence they witnessed as an explanation for their physical behaviour. For example, Vicky stated that witnessing various forms of violence hardened her, and as a result she:

“(...) started doing weights, and I started pumping up, getting mouthy, like ‘fuckin’, excuse my language. ‘Stay out of my way. Don’t touch me.’ You know, that type of deal.”

As demonstrated in the women’s interviews physical violence does occur. The first immediate physical consequence of prison violence is pain and suffering. Alice and Vicky identified common types of physical suffering caused by inmates as a result from hair pulling, biting, hitting/ kicking, and bruises. To this list, Vicky added, broken noses, black eyes, fat lips, and stated that she had also witnessed more extreme examples where women experienced pain as a result of having been scalded, stabbed, and physical injuries that resulted in an inability to reproduce, paralysis, and death.

3.2.3: The Correctional Consequences of Prison Violence:

The third consequence of prison violence identified by the female participants in this study, were correctional consequences. These correctional consequences were described as the forms of consequences for breaking prison rules not only depended on the seriousness of the infraction, but the institution itself. Although punishment for institutional infractions generally consists of reassignment to a segregation unit for a short period of time, punishment can also result in a temporary loss of visitations, canteen, or other privileges. In extreme cases, punishment can involve both the police and judicial system. The inmates

commonly refer to segregation and cell confinement as the '*hole*' or '*seg.*' It is here that inmates are stripped of their already minimal privileges and left with simple necessities, that include a meal, bed, a toilet and one set of clothing. In segregation, the female inmate must rely on correctional officers for all amenities, including food, and human contact. It is the fear of solitary confinement that often permeates and influences an inmate's behaviour and determines the prison experience. As the female participants in this study conveyed, it is the threat of being confined to the '*hole*' that diffuses many near violent encounters.

In attempts to control violence, the correctional system has developed institutional regulations that must be followed when dealing with inmate misconduct. Institutional consequences for physical violence include, institutional reports, stricter surveillance, cell confinement, inmate segregation, and at extremes, police charges. Although the typical institutional response would be a multi-step process, the female inmates who were interviewed for this study identified only a few of those processes. Due to the scope of this study, we will address only those described by the female inmates.

The most frequently discussed correctional consequences of the use of prison violence by the female participants in both institutions was the use of the segregation unit. The segregation unit is an isolated cell, separated from the general population, where the only contact would be with correctional officers. The women referred to these units as *ProSeg*, *protective custody (PC)*, the '*digger*,' and the '*hole*.' Despite its various names, inmates are

aware of its existence and learn to fear being transferred there. As Alice emphasized, '*the hole*' is the correctional facilities' form of punishment for all misconducts and the threat of being transferred there regulates behaviour. The policy is that when there is an altercation between inmates, all those involved are isolated into segregation units. Cathie, Lynda, Sasha, Sammy, Vicky, Alice, Lisa, and Teri agreed and confirmed that undesirable behaviour performed in front of guards will result in all involved inmates being reassigned to a segregation unit. Consequently, anxiety levels increase as correctional officers threaten that if an inmate is involved in a violent act, they take away their privileges and reinforce the rules. These include family visits, telephone or mail access. Many of the female participants indicated that the restrictions of personal freedom, movement, and the loss of personal property has a serious affect on the women's self-esteem.

Three women provided descriptions of the segregation units. Lisa who had spent time in a segregation unit, and Alysyn and Jean, who had been told things about it and produced descriptions that were contrary to its real description. Although the folklore around the '*hole*' may be highly exaggerated, its description continues to act as a deterrent to most inmates. Lisa described her first experience in the segregation unit:

“(...) I was just there overnight. Ate my breakfast in there. Someone snuck me a cigarette, ‘cause you’re not allowed to smoke in there. When they take you down there, they strip search you, see if you have any cigarettes or anything. Then they leave you in there with a mattress, a pillow, a blanket. It’s just like a room but nothing in it.”

Although Alice described the '*hole*' as a cell where the officers take away your pillow and all the inmate has is a mattress on the floor, this and other highly exaggerated stereo-typical images of the segregation unit remain the dominant descriptions. For example, Alysyn reported that the '*hole*' was where: "(...) people sleep and shit there with no clothes (... [and sometimes] ...) they have a straight jacket." Jean also had horrific ideas about women being tortured in the segregation units. Lynda and Sammy also discussed the inappropriate correctional response to suicide attempts. The women in this study agreed that this punitive response is inappropriate and unsatisfactory in dealing with copycat or future suicide attempts. However, it is important to emphasize that the provincial system is often strapped with insufficient funding or trained personnel to provide supportive intervention. The experience of segregation can and is individually interpreted, this environment and the threat of being sent there provokes a diverse degree of psychological distress, stress, and feelings of anger, pain, horror, anxiety, fear, and terror.

The women in '*Institution B*' reported that cell confinement was a second consequence of cell confinement. The women referred to this form of punishment as being '*deadlocked*,' Jean explained that when correctional officers become aware of a violent situation, the guards:

"(...) come in right away, you know. The guards are very good here. They take charge of it right away. As soon as it happens. So no one will get hurt. They lock you up in your cells, for about an hour after, you know

That's the worst of it too. We get locked up in our cells because of these people. Even if you didn't do it. We have to get punished, too. So, that's not very pleasant."

Jean's statement was supported by several other women, as they tried to convey feelings of resentment for being locked up due to the behaviour of others. Consequently, many inmates are motivated to prevent and make an attempt to resolve situations before it escalates to avoid cell confinement. Teri supported Jean's statement and reported that other women will shout:

"(...) 'I don't want to be locked up. Stop. Stop. I don't want to be locked up.' 'Cause when something like that happens in the sector, everybody gets, what they call 'dead lock.' You have to stay in your cells, until it's all resolved. In other words the whole sector gets punished."

In spite of the women's protests to stop the violence several other women agreed with Lisa, who described '*deadlock*' as not a real form of punishment because in the cells, "you have a television, or a radio, you have your cigarettes, your drinks, your popcorn, or whatever."

The female inmates also suggested that the correctional response of those female inmates who slash or attempt suicide should include stricter surveillance. As many participants shared, correctional facilities generally place these women in separate units and apart from the general population.

Prison violence also sparked a series of stereotypical views about gender roles. The participants described fellow inmates in terms of stereotypical behaviour, such as, all women gossip and are not to be trusted. Although all the female participants reflected low levels of trust in general, Jaycee shared how truly distrustful some inmates are, when she admitted she did not even trust her closest friend. Linda explained her distrust of women in stereotypes. She compared prison life to being in a snake pit:

“(...) You cannot trust women. That’s why I don’t have women friends, except my mother and my sister. I’ve never had a girlfriend. A friend that I hung around with. Like all my friends have been male. ‘Cause you can’t trust women. I learned that at any early age. You turn your back, they’ll stab you. Talk about you and stab you in the back. Snake pit.”

The last stereotypical reference about women referred specifically to the women who were viewed as aggressive women. Suzanne and Alysyn referred to the violent women as being like men. Suzanne described the violent attacks between women in jail as similar to men’s fights that one would witness. Alysyn extended her descriptions of the more violent and aggressive women to those women serving longer sentences and compared them to being like bosses, concluding that bosses were also male. She stated that the more aggressive women who are serving longer sentences:

“(...) have to think about their life built here. So, they become like, more bosses. Like, more men. (...) They’re more like men. There are more men than women in here. They should tie them up and put them in (...) [a male correctional facility].”

Lisa's interview revealed similar stereotypes about the more aggressive women and tendency to view them as bosses, controllers and ultimately male. She concluded that these women: "walk around like they're men. So, they more or less run everybody. *'You do this for me. You do that for me.'*"

The last and least identified consequence of female prison violence, was the development of positive relationships between women in prison. Although a few women reported positive relationships, most referred to them as temporary acquaintances and relationships and not friends they would remain in contact with upon their release. Lisa discussed that some positive friendships do develop because "people click. When you meet somebody, you have the same interests, you know the same people." Alice stated that she had many positive interactions with other female inmates, but concluded that she may be a minority who felt that way. She explained that her positive relationships could be because she is older, and like their *mother* and not a threatening peer. Some women described situations where female inmates are a support system. Teri added that many of the women try to help and support each other. Jean shared a similar experience where other women helped her adjust to prison. She responded that some women:

"(...) were really nice. (...) There was one across from me that helped me out a lot. She was very good to me. I didn't have any clothes or anything to go to bed. She lent me a dress, jogging pants, and T-shirt. My

clothes came 11 days after, 'cause it takes time to go through, you know. She was nice to me. Very good. It's nice to have someone who's nice to you."

Hence, positive relationships amongst women did result and often acted as a differentiation between cliques, because these women spent time with peers who provide them with the most positive feedback, while alienating women who did not.

Other women also suggested that the female inmates became a pseudo-family. Alysyn, described the relationships between women like those of a family, because the women try to support one another. However, Jaycee contested this statement and denied that the women's relationships had any resemblance to a supportive family.

In conclusion, the consequences of prison violence are numerous and experienced on an individual level. However, patterns of consequences of prison violence are prevalent. This study revealed, that female inmates concluded that there are psychological, physical, and correctional consequences which result from prison violence. As with most experiences, the circumstances are uniquely interpreted and are influenced by the interpreters' psychological make-up.

Section 3.4: Suggestions on How to Reduce Prison Violence:

“I hope everybody will be fine ... but I guess, you can't change people ... can't change them at all.”

(Jean, interviewee).

The last pattern that emerged from the women's interviews was how serious the women considered prison violence to be and their suggestions on how to reduce it. However, when we asked the women whether it was possible to reduce prison violence their responses were less consistent. Daisy was the only inmate that answered that she was not sure, where as the remaining women did not think violence in prison would ever stop. For example, Suzanne explained that prison violence could not be reduced because “ You can't stop people from being violent like that. It's a prison mentality, you know. That's prison rules.” Interestingly, Sammy and Vicky who were repeat offenders and had served time in several correctional facilities, agreed that violence in jail has gotten worse. Sammy, who had been in and out of the provincial system during the last 17 years believed that there has been an increase in inmate suicide and that correctional staff have become more violent. Although Linda was the only woman that did not provide any suggestions, the remaining women provided several recommendations on how to reduce violence in provincial correctional facilities. The suggestions provided by the female participants in this study reflected the uniqueness of each woman's experience, however, each suggestion could be allocated into

more general categories that involve changing characteristics of the importation or deprivation model.

Many of the women provided suggestions that related to the importation model. However, the most overwhelming response was the women's concern for more rehabilitative programs, emphasising individual psychological counselling. Teri provided a poignant observation that many psychiatrists and criminologists have repeated for years, which is that incarcerated women: "really need somebody to listen. First and foremost." Alysyn and Sammy's interviews reached similar conclusions as they described the women's need for "psychiatrists or something. So, they can start coping with their pressures." Sammy theorized that correctional officers are an integral part of the rehabilitative team and should work with the female inmates more closely to help the women change their lives, and reduce the possibilities of the women re-offending. Sammy also recommended that institutional violence could be reduced if the correctional system did not:

"(...) have men working with the women, because the men should be for the men. Women with the women. You have men working in here. Some women are walking around in their shorts or just got out of the shower and have a towel wrapped around them. The men can see them. It's not right. They should have women all the time for the women, but they don't."

The female inmates in *'Institution B'* emphasized the need for better population classification. Alysyn stated that the Correctional System needs to categorize the women more efficiently by evaluating their profiles before they release them into a sector or into general population. Jean reported that in *'Institution B'* the women, regardless of the crimes they had committed, were all mixed in together. The mixing of populations made several women nervous and fearful of their environment. In fact, Jean and Daisy agreed and reported that these improvements are required so that other inmates would not be scared, and would simultaneously feel safe during their incarceration.

In conjunction with the deprivation model, the female inmates recommended the elimination of several prison conditions which would reduce female prison violence. These improved conditions included the introduction of more activities for the inmates to keep them occupied, and ensure better living conditions which include a better quality of food, more consistent yard time, and better population classification. The women from *'Institution A'* who were living in dormitory quarters, emphasized the need to have better living conditions, whereas the women from *'Institution B,'* who were housed in individual cells, agreed that segregating the general population according to similar types of crime would reduce the friction between inmates and the occurrence of prison violence. The women indicated that there was a need for more individual and personal space, hence being less crowded therefore more private and less vulnerable. Daisy, a young woman who had been assaulted stated that women must have their: "own space. So, you can protect yourself."

Women from both institutions agreed that the inmates need more things to do. The female inmates believed that by keeping the women occupied they would have less opportunity for potential conflicts. Vicky and Sasha's interviews also emphasized the need to have more to do which would provide the inmates with the opportunity to get out of their dorms more frequently. Both women stressed the importance of time outside in the bad weather. Vicky suggested that what the jail needed was more recreational staff to organize and supervise more activities for the inmates. Although the women from *'Institution B'* expressed similar needs for more organized activities for the women, their activity level already exceeded that of *'Institution A.'* For example, Lisa and Jean were attending and enjoying school. Jaycee and Shawna occupied their time by working. The female participants reported that the gym was a good place for women to release tension, because they are able to exercise, relax, and feel better.

In conclusion, the analysis section revealed the findings discussed in the interviews of the female participants. These interviews confirmed that provincially incarcerated women experience prison violence. Although different descriptions and interpretations were provided by the women, four distinctive patterns emerged from these interviews. The patterns included, the different types of prison violence that exist, the various explanations for its occurrence, the consequences of it, and suggestions on how to reduce prison violence.

CONCLUSION

The issue of prison violence has been a topic of much criminological, sociological, and psychological investigation. Although this thesis does not claim or suggest, that all forms of women's adaptation to prison is directly associated with violence, this thesis does examine female prison violence as one aspect of the whole prison experience for many women. Historically, research about prison violence has been male-oriented and focused predominantly on violence within the American federal correctional system. However, as conveyed in the female participants interviews in this study, research on prison violence should also include a female inmate perspective. A literature review highlighted that prison violence is also a safety concern within Canadian correctional facilities and further investigation proved a gap in the research of prison violence in provincial facilities. Although a part of the Corrections Canada mandate is to ensure the safety of correctional employees and those individuals incarcerated in a facility, the women's interviews reflect a need to improve this concern.

Many theoretical approaches have been adopted to interpret the phenomenon of prison violence. In this thesis we examined the issue of prison violence from two dominant approaches, the *importation model* and the *deprivation model*. The *importation model* theorizes that prison violence is caused by individual and or psychological differences

brought into the prison by different people, whereas the *deprivation model* explains prison violence as a result of discomforts experienced by inmates because of the prison structure or regime. This would include experiences of overcrowding and deprivation of freedom. Although two opposing perspectives, the interviewees revealed that together these two models provided a clearer and more concise understanding of prison violence. Hence, this thesis outlined, that like any act of violence, violence is a combination of several factors that interact and feed off each another to result in a physical attack. This means that frustration experienced possibly because of one's deprivation of freedom in conjunction with one's already established acceptance of violent behaviour can influence the occurrence of a violent interaction. The open-ended interviews with provincially incarcerated women in this study support this claim. An obvious pattern emerged and revealed that the female participants believed that violence was not a result of one particular circumstance but a result of a combination of factors.

The results of this study proved that prison violence exists in women's provincial correctional facilities in Canada. This study also revealed that female prison violence is individually defined, interpreted, and experienced. More specifically, one woman's conceptualization of a situation as violent or threatening, may not be defined as serious circumstances by another. This thesis also revealed that women experience high levels of fear and violence at the hands of women, not only by men.

The provincially incarcerated women identified various forms of prison violence. The types of violence they identified were categorized into six types. These types of violence included psychological, physical, sexual, racial, economic, and institutional violence. Although the women themselves did not segregate different experiences into categories their descriptions of various violent attacks fell into five general categories.

The interviews of the female inmates revealed that psychological abuse is the most experienced or witnessed form of violence between female inmates in jail. However, discrepancies arose in the women's experiences and the degrees of intensity, which they had experienced because of what they had witnessed. Although some women did not report experiencing fear, their interviews revealed high levels of stress and concern over their own physical safety. Female inmates' definition and experiences of psychological abuse included harassment, tormenting, and threats. Again, the various forms of abuse were individually experienced to various intensities.

The intensity of how a woman interpreted the various forms of prison violence were generally influenced by the amount of time she had been in prison. For example, the more time a woman had spent in the system the less fearful she interpreted her surroundings and her fellow inmates to be. Whereas, the less experienced women, serving their first sentence communicated extremely high levels of stress and fear of their environment. The length of time the first timers had been in prison also explained their comfort level in the jail. The

interviews revealed that even women serving their first sentence, experienced higher levels of 'comfort,' the longer they had been in jail. It appeared that the longer a women was in jail the more an inmate had learned the appropriate rules to ensure their physical and emotional safety.

Although not the most frequently experienced form of abuse in prison, physical violence was the most often described. Examples of physical violence included everything from minor assaults, such as pushing and biting to the more serious physical injuries and even death. The interviewees summarized that physical assaults are spontaneous and an act that usually arose between two women. The women feared physical violence the most and this fear often structured and guided the women's behaviour.

Sexual violence was described by a few women. Sexual violence was defined as any uninvited contact of a sexual nature. Women who spoke of sexual violence were those who had been incarcerated several times and in more than one institution. Although only a few women described sexual violence, several mentioned having heard stories of it.

The last form of violence that the women identified was institutional violence. Most women defined institutional violence as negative consequences or discomforts experienced due to the prison regime. This included the women's lack of freedom, restrictions of movement, the prison diet, and the lack of privacy from correctional officers and other

inmates. One participant spoke extensively of the violence she experienced at the hands of the correctional officers. However, similar to the majority of the interviewees, she attributed them responsibility and blame for most of her negative experiences to the prison regime and correctional officers. Although an interesting topic, investigation of institutional violence experienced because of correctional staff was not the focus of this thesis, but warrants further and separate investigation beyond this Master's thesis.

The second section of this analysis investigated the women's explanations for prison violence. The women's explanations were unique to each woman's experiences, understanding, and analytical abilities. Despite the different explanations of why there is violence in prison, the inmates revealed a pattern by suggesting that violent acts were a result of individual and environmental factors. Individual factors were identified as personal stressors the women experienced because of their private lives, and environmental factors were labelled as stressors experienced because of being incarcerated. Combined together these factors contribute to high levels of stress and structure unclear thinking patterns which influence spontaneous behaviour.

The third section addressed the consequences on the female inmates because of prison violence. Most of the female participants outlined individual consequences, such as reassignment to segregation, a withdrawal of privileges, having a written report about the incident filed into the inmates institutional record, and in extreme cases having additional

criminal charges added to their sentence. Most of the women from "*Institution B*" discussed prison violence as having consequences on the inmates as a collective. For example, women were restricted and confined to individual cells for extended periods of time, as a result of their fellow inmates behaviour.

The female participants also provided suggestions on how to reduce prison violence. The overwhelmingly popular suggestion was the women's need for rehabilitation and counselling. Most women believed that counselling would help end their cycle of crime and imprisonment. Other women stated the need for an improved inmate classification process, that distinguishes and separates women based on the types of crimes the women had committed. The women explained that because of differences in mentality between inmates serving time for minor offences and offenders who are in jail for more serious crimes and longer sentences, their sentences necessitate a certain mind frame hence the need to segregate / classify differently.

Idealistically, there are changes needed in Canada's provincial correctional facilities for women. Studies such as those discussed in this study, have repeatedly emphasized the need for improved rehabilitative techniques when dealing with the female inmate population. This study reveals that the female inmates also recognize this need. Although some changes have been made within the federal system, changes must now be implemented within the

provincial system because presently, prison continues to function as a total institution. As a total institution, prisons structure and control behaviour as inmates continue to perceive that they are subjected to deprivation, frustration, degradation, and powerlessness to intense degrees. Sadly, this thesis concluded and confirmed that most women, regardless of their environment live in fear of violence in its various guises, hence, we could suggest that incarcerated women have more in common with women in the community than we expect. Consequently, laws, agencies, and police have proactively tried to ensure the safety of all women, however it appears that we have '*forgotten*' one segment of the female population, incarcerated women. We, as a society, must continue to demand the safety of all women, because all women have the right to be safe.

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Annex 1: Fact Sheet

Female Participant's Fact Sheet

1: Age: _____

2: Educational Background: _____

3: Employment History: _____

4: Crime(s) Presently Serving Time For: _____

5: Length of Present Sentence: _____

6: Criminal Record and Sentence(s) Given: _____

7: Time Served at Correctional Facilities: _____

NAME: _____

PSEUDONYM: _____

INTERVIEW TAPE NUMBERS: _____

Annex 2: Consent Form**CONSENT FORM FOR FEMALE INMATES**

Current Date.

Cathy Croteau (Master's student)
Criminology Department
University of Ottawa
1 Stewart St., P.O. Box 450, Stn. A.
K1N 6N5

I _____, as a woman who has or is presently serving a provincial or federal sentence within a Canadian penal institution, am interested in collaborating in the study conducted by Cathy Croteau. The purpose of this study is to examine women, imprisonment, and violence in Canada from a female inmates' perspective. My participation in this interview will consist essentially of attending one interview of approximately one hour in duration. I understand that the contents will be used only for Cathy Croteau's research and thesis.

I understand that since this activity deals with very personal information, it may induce emotional reactions which may, at times, be negative. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize this possibility.

I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, before or during an interview, refuse to participate, and refuse to answer questions without prejudice.

I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. Anonymity will be assured by the omission of my name and exact details. I have given permission to the researcher to use any information concerning my experience as a sentenced woman incarcerated within a Canadian penal institution.

The interview will be taped and a photocopy of the interview transcript will be given to me within a few weeks of the interview, so I may correct, clarify, or omit any facts that I provided during the interview.

Any information requests or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project may be addressed to the University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC), by calling the Secretary of the Committee (613-562-5800 ext. 1246).

There are two copies of the consent form. I will keep one copy and the researcher will keep the other.

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

For any further information, please contact:

Cathy Croteau
Department of Criminology
University of Ottawa
1 Stewart, P.O 450, Str. A
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 6N5