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FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

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The "Discovery" of the Violent Women in Prison: A Descriptive Analysis of
Violent Incidents in the Canadian Federal Correctional System

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AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

THE "DISCOVERY" OF THE VIOLENT WOMAN IN PRISON:
A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS IN THE
CANADIAN FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM

Amey Bell

Submitted to the Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa, in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Despite increasing attention to the issue of female offending, little empirical research has been conducted on women's violence within Canadian prisons. This thesis provides a descriptive and exploratory analysis of violence in federal correctional institutions for women offenders in Canada. More specifically, it examines the nature and extent of violent incidents, the characteristics of violent perpetrators, and the individual and environmental influences for prison violence. To further our understanding of this phenomenon, three theoretical perspectives and their relation to female prison violence are investigated, including the strengths and limitations. These include feminist theory, prison adjustment theories, and theory of sex differences in aggression.

The methodology for this study involves the incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative data sources. Using quantitative methods, the research examines the occurrence of violent incidents from January 1st, 1995 to December 31st, 2001, and profiles women offenders who have committed violent incidents within this time frame. Qualitative interviews were conducted with five women offenders in three federal institutions across Canada to explore their perceptions about violence and the possible influences for this behaviour.

The findings from the quantitative data indicate that the rate of violent incidents appears to be increasing, with staff assaults representing the highest incidence of reported violence across the years. Women offenders who have committed violent incidents are largely Caucasian, single, 26 to 35 years old, have no high school diploma, and were unemployed at arrest. Furthermore, the majority are incarcerated for robbery, sentenced from 2 to 4 years, and have extensive criminal histories. Some comparisons are made with a snapshot of women offenders in custody to determine any similarities and differences between the two groups. The qualitative data revealed that there are both individual and environmental factors that influence female prison violence: drug use, victimization, violence as self representation, prison culture, and institutional goals. According to the respondents, the environmental factors appear to play a more dominant role in influencing this type of behaviour. However, each set of factors were interconnected in complex, multidimensional ways. This study concludes by linking the results to past research and theory, and suggests new routes for research and theoretical development. This also includes a discussion of the implications for policy and programs in women's corrections. The limitations of the study, as well as the major contributions of this research are outlined.

INTRODUCTION

For almost the last decade, there has been a growing concern about violence in Canadian federal prisons for women. Women offenders incarcerated at Saskatchewan Penitentiary have been described as “Canada’s most dangerous female offenders” (Foss, 2002: 1). While the majority of incarcerated women offenders present little risk, a small group of violent women offenders have been presenting problems for the security and management of Canadian correctional institutions (Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), 1990). These women have been creating institutional programming and placement obstacles nation-wide. Furthermore, there may be a heightened level of skepticism among correctional and parole officials regarding their successful release into the community.

Throughout Canadian penal history, corrections for federally sentenced women have been considered an “afterthought.” Moreover, the failure to address the dynamic needs and experiences of violent women offenders has become clearly apparent. A brief recount of history will demonstrate the evolution in which this neglect has transformed despite the fact that violence and disorder has characterized the women offender population for years. This trend is traced to the federal report, Creating Choices (1990), CSC strategies to respond to violent women offenders, to a national investigation, The Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women (1996), and finally to the current status of penitentiary placement for federally sentenced women in Canada.

Creating Choices

In response to the numerous public concerns and criticisms about women's corrections, in 1989 the Commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada established the Task Force of Federally Sentenced Women (TFFSW) in partnership with the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS). The report of the TFFSW was entitled Creating Choices. This federal document attempted to meet the special needs and unique experiences of women offenders by developing a holistic, woman-centred model of corrections. This model was guided by five principles: empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect and dignity, supportive environment, and shared responsibility (CSC, 1990: 125-132). The primary recommendation put forth by the Task Force was the closure of the Prison for Women (Ontario) and the opening of five regional facilities, including an Aboriginal healing lodge. Consistent with previous government reports (Refer to Appendix A), Creating Choices was known for its reiteration of the numerous problems in federal corrections for women including inadequate programming, geographic dislocation, over-classification, insufficient cultural and spiritual provisions, and poor community reintegration.

The primary focus of Creating Choices was on the majority of women whose needs were plentiful but whose risk to themselves and others was fairly minimal. The report further discussed in detail the high proportion of women offenders who are victims of abuse. As a result, women offenders were portrayed as more likely to harm themselves than others. The report maintains that "a very small number of women have come to rely on violence in order to survive overwhelming abuse throughout their lives. It is believed that these women will respond well to a

supportive environment” (CSC, 1990: 90, 110). In this context, women offenders’ use of violence was conceptualized as a response to past abuse. The report also recommended the placement of federally sentenced women designated as minimum, medium, and maximum security in each regional facility with different living cottages accommodating each security level.

There is some debate with regard to the extent to which the report addressed the needs of violent women offenders. According to external critics, the report did not fully acknowledge the small number of women offenders with high needs and high risk, and who may subsequently pose an immense threat of violence against others. As Shaw (2000: 62) noted: “the silence around women’s use of violence was evident in Creating Choices”. The woman-centered model developed in Creating Choices “failed to take into account of the fact that women can be perpetrators of violence as well as victims” (Shaw, 1999: 258). Furthermore, Creating Choices did not acknowledge that the empowering regime proposed in the report may not adequately meet the unique security and programming needs of some women offenders who resort to violence. It became clear to some that the risk and security classification of women offenders was managed as a whole without consideration for individual differences and without thorough examination of this high risk-high need group.

In contrast to the above arguments, CSC representatives have suggested that Creating Choices indeed addressed the small number of women who relied on violence as a survival mechanism. This report accomplished this by designating a

specific cottage (i.e., enhanced unit) in each regional facility for women displaying signs of disturbance, or presenting a risk to others (CSC, 1995b; Vanneste, 1995).

The Task Force recognized that those inmates would need to be housed separately and that special intervention strategies would be required to assist these inmates to learn alternatives to violent behaviour (CSC, 1995b: 8).

These proponents also state that Creating Choices made a distinction between managing violent women, women with special needs, and high risk women (*ibid*, 1995: 7). Although these distinctions were made in the report, the enhanced units appeared to be only sufficient for short accommodation and ultimately were not meeting the security or programming needs of maximum-security women or intensive mental health offenders (McDonagh, 1999: 2). In addition, “special” intervention strategies were not formally established or defined in either policy or practice.

A number of unanticipated problems occurred with the inception of the new regional facilities. As expected by some, there were a small number of women who did not respond positively to the new living arrangements. This group appeared to experience extreme difficulties in managing themselves in the community-style houses, while they posed different risks and needs for correctional staff due to their varying levels of security. Gradually, it was recognized that the cottage-style accommodations and the principles of ‘empowerment’ and ‘responsibility’ were no longer considered applicable or effective for a select set of offenders. In 1996, this realization was intensified by a series of incidents, including escapes, attempted escapes, self-injurious and suicidal acts, inmate assaults against staff and other inmates, and one inmate murder (CSC, 1996a).

In response to public scrutiny surrounding these events, increased security measures (e.g., cameras and fences) were implemented. Secure accommodation was doubled and extra segregation cells were added to the facilities. Nonetheless, it became increasingly evident that approximately 15% of the female offender population could not function in regional facilities (CSC, 2000b). The Correctional Service of Canada decided to temporarily transfer maximum-security women who required a greater degree of structure and control into units co-located in men's facilities. Women who required long-term intensive mental health treatment were transferred to mental health units in other facilities (CSC, 2000b).

As soon as the potential for women's violence was "discovered", it was simultaneously acknowledged that the regional facilities were not the domain to appropriately manage this behaviour. Almost automatically, but certainly representative of a reactive response, there was a shift in thinking about "the nature of women offenders, what they 'need' and how they should be 'dealt with' (Shaw, 1999: 256):

The re-discovery of the 'violent' woman and the failure to acknowledge accountability have obscured some of the fundamental aspects of the prison itself – its capacity to generate conflict and violence. There has been no clearly articulated understanding of the factors which tend to increase or decrease the likelihood of violence (Shaw, 1999: 258).

The use of the new facilities in this context "reveals the naiveté of a vision of a woman-centered prison that denies the sometimes extreme realities of prison life" (Hannah-Moffat, 1995: 152). This reality points to the need not only to acknowledge women's capacity to be violent but to explore the situational and historical contexts in

which violence occurs in prison, and ultimately to develop intervention strategies to respond to this violence.

Responses to Violent Women

Due to the increasing concerns about this particular sub-population, CSC has made efforts through program, consultation, and accommodation strategies to respond to the needs of violent women offenders. A mental health strategy has also been developed in response to the increasing needs of women offenders with mental health issues.

Program Development

Although a specific violence prevention program is not currently available for federally sentenced women, other programs have been developed for high-risk women offenders and incorporate program aspects addressing aggressive behaviour. Specifically, these include the Spirit of a Warrior Program, the Anger and Emotions Management Program, and the Intensive Treatment Program (ITP) (Refer to Appendix B). Many of these programs have been developed for male offenders, and are being piloted with the women offender population. Both cultural and gender modifications to program content have been made for its appropriate application to women offenders. Two programs, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR), have been introduced to address the needs of women with specific mental health problems.

Consultation

Since 1995, consultation initiatives in the form of brainstorming sessions¹, focus groups, stakeholders meetings², and research initiatives³ have occurred in response to the growing concern about violence committed by women. Specifically, CSC representatives gathered to form a Violence Prevention Focus Group in February 2002. This meeting was held to facilitate the development of a model of violence, and in particular, a Violence Prevention Program for women offenders in federal corrections.

Security and Accommodation

In response to the inability of the regional facilities to adequately respond the security and treatment needs of this high risk, high need group of women offenders, the Intensive Intervention Strategy (1999) was developed. The strategy involved the construction of Enhanced Security Units to accommodate maximum-security women and Structured Living Environments to accommodate minimum and medium security women with mental health problems in the regional facilities (CSC, 2000b: 1-2). The hope is that this strategy, which is based on static and dynamic⁴ security, and interdisciplinary staff team intervention and treatment, will be able to adequately respond to the needs and risks presented by this population. Four structured living

¹ See CSC, (1995b).

² See CSC, (2000c).

³ See Crump, J. (1995); Shaw, M. & Dubois, S. (1995); and Taylor, K. & Flight, J. (forthcoming).

⁴ CSC uses the terms static and dynamic factors to refer to the level of security and risk for each offender. Static factors refer to behaviours that cannot be changed by any level of intervention (i.e., criminal history), whereas dynamic factors are behaviours that are changeable by varying levels of intervention (i.e., needs).

environments were built from August to December 2001 while four secure units have been built in the regional facilities from January to April 2003.

Mental Health Strategy

The mental health needs of the federally sentenced women population has become increasingly evident due to their involvement in self destructive and sometimes violent behaviour (Rivera, 1996). During the opening year of the regional facilities, it also became evident that women offenders with mental health needs required intensive healing and psychological intervention to combat these behavioural issues. Need assessments and the consequent recommendations have resulted in proposals for specialized programs, living options, and staff intervention for this population (Whitehall, 1995; Rivera, 1996; Laishes, 1997; Warner, 1998). In addition to these findings, the introduction of the Mental Health Strategy (1995) has provided a framework for the development of mental health programs and services for women offenders (Laishes, 1997).

An update of this strategy, Mental Health Strategy for Women Offenders (2002), currently reflects some of the developments in women's mental health since the preceding strategy (Laishes, 2002). This strategy identified two gaps in mental health intervention, namely, intermediate care for women who do not benefit from Dialectical Behaviour Therapy and Psychosocial Rehabilitation programs, and additional intensive care treatment beds for women who cannot be transferred to the Regional Psychiatric Centre (Laishes, 2002: 36). Currently, the Regional Psychiatric Centre (Saskatchewan) is the only psychiatric facility for federal offenders in Canada

with a maximum of 12 beds available for women offenders specifically⁵. Some federally sentenced women receive treatment at Institute Phillippe-Pinel (Quebec) (Laishes, 2002)⁶.

The Arbour Report

Coincidentally, during the construction of the five regional facilities for women offenders, a series of events occurred in the Prison for Women that would have monumental implications for women's corrections in Canada. On April 22nd 1994, an incident between six inmates and several guards resulted in staff injuries. The continued disturbance of these particular inmates led to their segregation and ultimately the women were strip-searched and shackled by a male emergency response team (Arbour, 1996). In response to concerns about human right violations, the Solicitor General of Canada announced that an independent inquiry would be conducted and headed by Madam Justice Louise Arbour. The purpose of The Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women was to investigate and report on the management of the incidents by the Correctional Service of Canada. In addition to the discussion of the law and policy regarding the staff-inmate incidents, the inquiry concluded that the incidents under investigation were a product of staff frustration and stress, a dysfunctional unit, and the lack of a "rational correctional strategy" (Arbour, 1996: 54). To date, it is the only government report to discuss violence in Canadian correctional institutions for women. However, the

⁵ Regional Psychiatric Centre is a multi-level security institution that delivers an Intensive Healing Program, a voluntary program for female offenders displaying symptoms of mental health disorder.

⁶ Institute Phillippe-Pinel has a contract with CSC for inpatient treatment services.

investigation did not focus on violence between inmates, which for the male offender population, constitutes a larger majority of violence in prisons (Porporino, 1992: 3).

In addition to the inquiry, the internal Board of Investigation (1995c) resulting from these series of events also generated some conclusions about women offenders who are violent and disruptive while incarcerated.

The philosophy governing treatment and management of inmates at Prison for Women appears to assume that women are victims and therefore not responsible for their behaviour. This assumption results in confusion of treatment and no clear goals for inmates (CSC, 1995c: 42).

Beyond the more fundamental requirement of clearer goals and philosophy in women's corrections, the report recommended increased structure, intensive programming, dynamic security, and achieving a balance between control and freedom (CSC, 1995c: 42). In addition, it appeared that the placement of violent disruptive women, and its accompanying management strategies would continue to present challenges in the transition to the regional facilities. The investigation concluded: "the structure of the new institutions does not appear to provide the control required to safely manage the women who were so disruptive in the April 22-26, 1994 incidents" (CSC, 1995c: 57).

The inattention to female prison violence is not only evident in history and among federal reports, but also in the academic literature. For instance, the majority of past research on prison violence has focused on the male offender population. In comparison to male offender research, there have been a small number of studies with a specific concentration on prison misconduct among the women offender population (Kruttschnitt & Krmpotich, 1990; Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986). These studies have placed a greater emphasis on the relatively minor nature of prison disciplinary

infractions rather than severe physical violence. To a greater extent, research has tended to compare males and females in regard to their prison behaviour (Lindquist, 1980; Spektorov-McClellan, 1994). Researchers have also examined the behaviour patterns and social interactions of women offenders. These analyses have included suicide (Liebling, 1992, 1995), self-injury (Jones, 1986; Heney, 1990), inmate social systems or sub-culture (Giallombardo, 1966; Heffernan, 1974), prison coping and adaptation (Layton-MacKenzie, Robinson & Campbell, 1989; Stevens, 1998), and sex roles or homosexual relations (Ward & Kassebaum, 1965). Violent behaviour perpetrated by women offenders remains as “one of the most enigmatic areas of female experience and academic inquiry” (Campbell, 1986: 28). As such, there is little empirical research that documents this phenomenon, and more so, in the context of Canadian prisons.

The present study explores the nature and extent of serious physical violence in federal correctional institutions for women in Canada. This examination will encompass a quantitative analysis of institutional incidents to include murder, hostage-taking, forcible confinement, major disturbance, inmate fights, and assault. Using official records of the Correctional Service of Canada, a descriptive profile of incidents and their perpetrators will be provided from January 1st, 1995 to December 31st, 2001 across ten federal institutions for women (Refer to Appendix C). This analysis will identify the characteristics of women offenders who are consistently involved in violent incidents, as well as the specific institutions in which violence occurs most frequently. In addition, this will be followed by a qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with five women offenders who have committed violent

incidents while incarcerated. This approach builds upon the framework created from the quantitative data by exploring the individual and environmental influences for prison violence as suggested by the women themselves.

As evident in the paucity of research on female prison violence, there is a strong need to contribute to the criminological research field and to correctional intervention practices with regard to women-perpetrated violence in prison. The importance of this academic inquiry can not be understated. Historically, violence perpetrated by women in prison has been misplaced from correctional agendas, or contextualized in the discourses of pathologically "mad" or deviantly "bad" behaviour. It is one of the central aims of this study to acknowledge women offenders' potential to act violently in this setting, which may be influenced by a number of individual or situational factors, and which extend far beyond gender stereotypes and female biology. This recognition may ultimately impact upon operational practice, policy development, and theoretical exploration, while provide direction for future research. Based on the findings of this research, intervention targets may be identified in order to effectively address the programming, security, and reintegration needs of this group. In addition, these results may demonstrate the need to develop violent-specific, women-sensitive intervention in the form of programs, services, and treatment modules. Methodologically, the incorporation of quantitative and qualitative research questions and methods allows us to investigate this behaviour using multiple entry points in anticipation that such an examination will allow us to grasp a clearer and more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under study.

The entirety of this thesis will be divided into five chapters. The first chapter reviews the academic and professional literature regarding women's behaviour in prisons. This section begins with a demographic profile of federally sentenced women in Canada. Following this background information, research from Canada, United States, and Great Britain is presented regarding violence among the women offender population. Included in this review are a number of studies that have compared prison misconduct between male and female offender populations. Finally, the research that has examined both individual and environmental factors related to prison misbehaviour is detailed.

The second chapter details the theoretical perspectives relevant to women's violent behaviour in prison including feminist theory, theories of prison adjustment, and theory of sex differences in aggression. More so, it highlights the need for further theoretical development and understanding in this area due to the limitations of present theories and their capacity to address female violence in prison.

The third chapter presents the methodology for this study. The research questions for this thesis are discussed. The data sources are presented, as well as the reasons for their selection and their limitations. The research sample and time frame are also introduced and the process of data analysis is discussed at length.

The fourth chapter presents the results of the research study. The findings include the incident rate for a seven-year time frame, as well as the number of women offender perpetrators. A number of demographic, offence, sentence, and incident variables are explored to provide a clearer understanding of female violence in prison.

The results of interviews with women offenders are also presented and framed in the context of the individual and environmental factors that influence women's violence.

The final chapter provides a discussion of the results including the relevance of past research findings and implications of the current research findings. The final section also provides suggestions for intervention targets, programming strategies, and future research directions for the population under study.

CHAPTER ONE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following section will first provide a profile of federally sentenced women in Canada. In addition, the prevalence of violence in women's institutions will be addressed as a separate phenomenon. Research comparisons of prison misconduct between male and female offenders will also be discussed. There have been also several investigations into the causes of violent prison behaviour. As such, the primary focus of this discussion will identify the individual and environmental variables, which have been used to explain violent incidents in prison. In reviewing the literature, it is hoped that the dynamics of women's violent behaviour in prison will be revealed and thus provide avenues for further exploration.

A Profile of Federally Sentenced Women

As of March 2002, there were 843 women offenders serving a federal sentence in Canada. Of the total, 358 were incarcerated and 485 were under community supervision (CSC, 2002b: 6). Women represent three percent of the federal offender population in custody and five percent of the federal offender population supervised in the community (Trevethan & Rastin, 2003). Since 1995, warrant of committal admissions⁷ to federal custody for federally sentenced women have dramatically increased (Boe, Olah, & Cousineau, 2000: 1). From 1994 to 1999, there has been a significant increase in cases involving adult women convicted of major crimes such as homicide, attempted murder, robbery, major assault, and drug

⁷ A warrant of committal admission is defined as a new sentence from the court rather than a revocation of a previous release to community supervision.

trafficking/importation (Boe et al., 2000: 13). The number of cases sentenced to a federal term has increased three-fold during the same period (Boe et al., 2000: 14). The increases in the federally sentenced women population justify attention to this specific population of offenders and the living conditions in which women offenders are incarcerated.

A recent profile of incarcerated federally sentenced women indicates that the majority of women are young, single, and Caucasian (MacDonald, 2001: 3-4). However, it is important to note that Aboriginal women offenders are over-represented in the federal prison system. While Aboriginal women represent only 3% of Canada's total female population (Statistics Canada, 2001), they constitute 27% of incarcerated women offenders and 43% of maximum-security women (CSC, 2002b: 6, 14). Over half of the women (55%) incarcerated in the co-located units were Aboriginal as of April 2002 (CSC, 2002b: 14).

The largest proportion of women are incarcerated for Schedule I offences (52%) followed by Schedule II offences (19%)⁸. Almost one-fifth (19%) of incarcerated women are serving sentences for first or second-degree murder (CSC, 2002c: 20)⁹. Research has also consistently found that an overwhelmingly majority of women offenders are poor, uneducated, unskilled, drug or alcohol dependent, and victims of sexual and physical abuse (Hannah-Moffat, 1991; CSC, 1990).

More recent profiles of women offenders have indicated that women who present unique and difficult challenges for correctional management and operations

⁸ Schedule I offences include: use of a firearm, sexual offences, criminal negligence, manslaughter, attempted murder, assault, robbery, arson. Schedule II offences include: drug-related offences. (Department of Justice, 1992).

⁹ As of March 31st, 2002.

are often classified as maximum security and involved in institutional incidents. As mentioned earlier, these women constitute a small proportion of the overall women offender population in custody (approximately 15%) (CSC, 2000b). Although women who have committed violent incidents have not been exclusively profiled, some reports have profiled women with a maximum-security classification (Morin, 1999; McDonagh, 1999). These women have been identified as high risk and high need as indicated in their poor institutional adjustment, anti-social behaviours and attitudes, severe emotional and mental health issues, and cognitive limitations and deficits. These factors certainly complicate the characteristics of this profile and more importantly the intervention strategies required for this population.

Violence among the Women Offender Population

There are very few studies that detail either the occurrence of disciplinary infractions in women's prisons or the prevalence of serious prison violence. In order to provide a more general understanding of the context in which women offenders perpetuate prison violence, the research findings are summarized for both minor and serious disciplinary offences.

A statistical overview for the fiscal year 2001/02 found that there were 2, 201 institutional charges against federally incarcerated women across Canada. Thirty percent of the charges were classified as serious in nature. According to CSC, a serious disciplinary offence occurs when "an inmate commits a serious breach of security, exhibits violent behaviour, commits or attempts to commit an act that could generate such behaviour on the part of others, or could cause harmful consequences to staff members or inmates" (CSC, 2002b: 23). Of the total number of serious charges

(n=664), 53% of women offenders were found guilty. In terms of regional distribution, Joliette Institution in Quebec and Grand Valley Institution in Ontario laid the most serious charges, while one charge was laid at the Okimaw Ochi Healing Lodge in Saskatchewan (CSC, 2002c: 23). Springhill Institution in Nova Scotia had the largest proportion of guilty findings for serious charges laid (23%). Aboriginal women offenders represented 21% of guilty court findings for serious charges (CSC, 2002b: 23). No other information was provided in conjunction with these figures.

A review of case files of women offenders (n=203) at Prison for Women and provincial institutions indicated that 46% of the women had current charges, ranging from one to over twenty charges (Shaw et al., 1992: 25). Women offenders reported being disciplined for the following infractions:

Using a radio without headphones, sitting in the cell of another inmate, having extra clothes in the cell, possession of 'contraband' (e.g., having a tomato or lemonade mix in the cell)...using bad language, or being disrespectful (e.g., yelling, singing and dancing, throwing a bowl of cereal on the floor, swearing at staff), and refusal to obey orders (Shaw et al., 1992: 25).

Approximately one-fifth of the women offenders (21%) had committed relatively short and minor discipline offences. In contrast, serious offences included threats of violence and assaults on staff or inmates. In comparison to other women, it appeared that only five women (2%) in the sample had long and serious histories of disciplinary offences (Shaw et al., 1992: 26). The authors also noted differences between institutions whereby certain institutions had higher rates of charges, and imposed heavier penalties. One explanation provided for this discrepancy is that a series of minor incidents may have resulted in heavier penalties than with the occurrence of random isolated incidents. Furthermore, some women felt that they

received heavier penalties than others for the same type of behaviour (Shaw et al., 1992: 25).

In another Canadian context, Croteau (2000) interviewed 15 women offenders incarcerated in two provincial institutions. This study identified six types of prison violence including psychological, physical, economical, racial, sexual, and institutional violence. Although, no specific rates were provided, it was concluded that psychological violence was the most frequently occurring violence in provincial institutions, while physical violence was considered minor in nature and sexual violence was the least common form of violence (Croteau, 2000: 46, 54, 65). Based on the women's responses, individual personality traits, external stressors, inmate rules, and prison mentality partially explained prison violence (Croteau, 2000: 71). The psychological, physical, and correctional¹⁰ consequences of prison violence were also outlined (Croteau, 2000: 84). The findings also suggested ways to reduce violence such as the provision of rehabilitation programs and counseling, the presence of female guards, more appropriate population classification, and more activities to occupy time (Croteau, 2000: 107-108).

One of the most comprehensive studies undertaken on female prison behaviour was conducted by Mandaraka-Sheppard (1986) in Great Britain. As part of the larger analysis, data were collected using inmate questionnaires and official records from three open security and three closed security women's prisons to examine the extent and nature of minor and serious misbehaviour. Mandaraka-Sheppard (1986: 95) concluded that of the total sample (n=332), over one-third of the

¹⁰ Correctional consequences referred to punishment such as segregation units, cell confinement, and loss of visitation privileges.

women offenders (34%) admitted their involvement in physical violent transgressions either one or more times. This may have included fighting with another inmate, fighting with a group of inmates, throwing objects at inmates, fighting with staff, throwing objects at staff, or damaging prison property. The frequencies for each incident are not provided; however, the author noted that inmates fights with staff were much fewer than fights among inmates. She also found that group violence was rare, but rather violent incidents committed by individual women were more common (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 93).

Another study in England compared a sample of female schoolgirls (n=251), female juvenile delinquents (n=60), and adult female offenders (n=53) (Campbell, 1986). The proportion of the female sample that had been involved in six or more fights were 26% for schoolgirls, 65% for juvenile delinquents, and 40% for adult offenders (Campbell, 1986: 31). In comparison to the schoolgirls and juvenile offenders, a larger number of adult women offenders reported resorting to biting and tearing clothes as a method of physical altercation. Eighty-one percent of the prison group reported punching as their main form of fighting (Campbell, 1986: 34). Both juvenile offenders (38%) and adult offenders (21%) admitted to using a weapon more than schoolgirls (8%) (Campbell, 1986: 35). The study concluded by stating that, not surprisingly, there was a greater degree of involvement in violence by institutional inmates (Campbell, 1986: 45).

Kruttschnitt and Krmpotich (1990) examined all female inmates (n=53) at the Minnesota Correctional Facility in the United States. While 70% of the women had engaged in non-aggressive acts, only 15% of the women had engaged in aggressive

acts such as fighting, arson, verbal threats, and weapon use (Kruttschnitt & Krmpotich, 1990: 380). The author notes that this figure appeared somewhat high compared to previous research, but indicates that it is difficult to determine the extent to which the data “reflect a high level of female aggression or simply a change in the behaviour of female inmates over time” (Kruttschnitt & Krmpotich, 1990: 380). Further examination of prison rule violations was conducted by Faily, Roundtree and Miller (1980) using a sample of female inmates (n=171) at the Louisiana Correctional Institute. In this study, the rules most often violated were disobedience (57%), fighting (8%), defiance (8%), and possession of contraband (8%) (Faily, Roundtree & Miller, 1980: 152). There was no discussion of serious rule violations among this sample of women offenders.

The studies presented are limited in scope, provide very little quantitative or qualitative results, and the data are largely outdated. More often, researchers have discussed the various explanations for women’s discipline and punishment including socialization practices (Thomas, 1993), sex role expectations (Carlen, 1998; Lloyd, 1995), gendered styles of anger expression (Campbell, 1993), and the social or situational context in which violence occurs (Shaw & Dubois, 1995). To an equal extent, research has examined male and female differences in prison disciplinary infractions and punishment.

Comparing Male and Female Prison Violence

Throughout history, the view that violent women offenders are more dangerous and destructive in prison than their male counterparts has persisted. In the 19th century, a prison official stated that it was “a well-established fact in prison

logistics that the women are far worse than the men...they are far more persistent in their evil ways, more outrageously violent, less amenable to reason or reproof" (Faith, 1993: 230). Contemporary officials follow similar assumptions that women offenders "by far [have] the highest rates of offences against prison discipline" (Heidensohn, 1995: 73) and that "violence and disturbance seem more prevalent in female institutions" (Heidensohn, 1995: 82). In contrast, Faith (1987) maintains that discipline problems in women's prisons are much less serious than in men's prisons. In reviewing the following findings, it is important to take into account that comparisons between women and men are "confounded by differences in the way the genders are treated by the criminal justice system" (Shaw & Dubois, 1995: 12).

In a comparison of male (n=243) and female (n=147) offenders in Florida incarcerated during a one year time frame, Lindquist (1980) attempted to find differences between the two populations for disciplinary offences. He found that the average female disciplinary offender committed significantly more offences than her male counterpart (4.4 and 2.6 respectively). However, males had committed significantly more serious offences. For both groups, minor disciplinary infractions such as verbal disrespect (15% females and 12% males), disobey verbal orders (8% females and 12% males), and obscene or profane acts (4% females and 5% males) were similar in nature and frequency (Lindquist, 1980: 309). The author states that minor incidents were quite common among women inmates given the relationship between female socialization and verbal aggression (Lindquist, 1980: 307). In terms of serious infractions, 24% of female offenders committed 150 physical assaults compared to 33% of male offenders (Lindquist, 1980: 311). This study provided no

further analysis with regard to serious physical violence among these two offender populations. In addition, it was not surprising that the women in the sample received significantly less severe punishment than the men considering women offenders committed less serious disciplinary offences than their male counterparts (Lindquist, 1980: 312).

Spektorov-McClellan (1994: 77) compared disciplinary practices for two samples of male (n=271) and female (n=245) offenders in Texas for one year. The results revealed that the proportion of serious infractions cited were relatively similar for males and females (3% and 4%, respectively); however, the number of female citations greatly exceeded the number of male citations (153 and 26 respectively). The main difference between male and female offenders on serious disciplinary offences was the larger number of women threatening or striking an officer. For example, the majority of males cited for these two offences were cited only once, while 5 of the 19 women cited for striking an officer were cited 7 or more times, and one woman was cited 11 times. Furthermore, of the 22 women cited for threatening an officer, over half were cited on two or more occasions, one on 11 occasions, and another on 17 occasions (Spektorov-McClellan, 1994: 78). The author concluded that some of the gender disparity for serious offence citations could be attributed to a few disturbed individuals. However, the data “do not support the belief that a few female ‘troublemakers’ are responsible for the disparity in citation rates overall” (Spektorov-McClellan, 1994: 78). Contrary to the previous study, women offenders were punished more severely than the men offenders in the sample (Spektorov-McClellan, 1994: 81).

Similar to the previous study, Tischler and Marquart (1989) compared official rule violations in disciplinary hearings from 1983 to 1986 for two male and two female institutions in Texas. In this four-year period, maximum-security females had significantly higher infraction rates for each year compared to maximum-security males. For example, in 1986, females had 290 disciplinary infractions per 100 inmates while males had 190 infractions per 100 inmates (Tischler & Marquart, 1989: 509). With regard to serious rule infractions, males were more likely to violate disciplinary rules compared to females. This included escapes, fighting with a weapon, striking an officer, threatening to harm an officer, striking an inmate, and riots. However, this difference was found to be non-significant (Tischler & Marquart, 1989: 510). Finally, the women offenders in this study were more likely to be involved in physical altercations with other inmates and to fight without the use of a weapon than their male counterparts. The authors concluded that women were just as likely as men to commit serious rule infractions and furthermore, women were more inclined to engage in physically assaultive behaviour to protect themselves or property from other inmates. Overall, these findings indicated a different method of resolving conflict between the sexes, and differential expressions of their violent behaviour (Tischler & Marquart, 1989: 511-512).

Despite research that has confirmed that women and men experience anger differently (Campbell, 1993; Shaw & Dubois, 1995) as well as gender differences in their reactions and adjustment to prison (DeRosia, 1998), studies continue to compare women and men's use of violence. These two studies provide complimentary results with regard to the frequency of disciplinary infractions but contradictory results

regarding the degree of disciplinary punishment for male and female offenders. These studies do not clarify whether violence in women's prisons is more prevalent than in men's prisons. In addition to a general understanding of the nature and extent of prison violence, it is necessary to explore various causes or explanations for violent and disruptive behaviour among the women offender population.

Explanations for Violent Behaviour in Prison

Both individual and environmental variables have been put forward to explain the prevalence and motivations for prison violence. Most of these investigations have been directed toward the male offender population, and moreover, many have solely concentrated on individual variables due to the relative ease with which these factors can be measured. Environmental characteristics have typically required a complex composite of research measures and analysis which has often been difficult to attain and measure. The following is an overview of the individual and environmental factors that have been explored among the women offender population in the context of violent institutional behaviour. These variables will be further elaborated in the chapter detailing the theoretical perspectives on prison violence.

Individual Variables

The race of women offenders have been found to affect the frequency of aggression and violation in prison. For example, Black women offenders incarcerated in the United States have been found to commit more violations than Caucasian women offenders (Faily & Roundtree, 1979). However, one study found that the race of the offender was significant for assault only (Lindquist, 1980).

Within a Canadian context, Shaw and colleagues (1992) found that Aboriginal women offenders were more likely to have discipline charges than non-Aboriginal offenders (68% and 40%, respectively). It is important to consider the complexities inherent in these findings whereby the over-representation of Black and Aboriginal women in prison violence may be a reflection of institutional racism as opposed to actual higher rates of misbehavior.

International research has consistently found that younger female inmates are more likely than older female inmates to have violated prison rules (Faily, Roundtree, & Miller, 1980; Jensen & Jones, 1976; Mandaraka Sheppard, 1986), to have discipline charges (Shaw & Dubois, 1995; Shaw et al., 1992), and to receive punishment (Shaw, 1991).

Marital status is a further indicator for violating prison rules. Single women are more likely to violate prison rules than women who are married, common-law, separated, or divorced (Faily & Roundtree, 1979; Faily, Roundtree, & Miller, 1980; Shaw & Dubois, 1995). Furthermore, one study in England demonstrated that single women and women without children have tended to misbehave more than married women and women with children. However, significant differences between the groups were less pronounced for physical violence compared to minor misbehaviour (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 105).

In her study of female offenders in England, Mandaraka-Sheppard (1986: 106) found that a violent criminal record did not significantly relate to the occurrence of minor misbehaviour or physical violence in prison. Moreover, the type of offence did not appear to distinguish between the low and high misbehaviour groups, and

further, the commission of a violent offence did not significantly relate to physical violence while incarcerated (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 106). Similarly, a study in the United States found that there was no significant differences between inmates who committed rule infractions and inmates who did not commit rule infractions with regard to the number of previous incarcerations (Faily, Roundtree & Miller, 1980: 153). The same study found that there were no significant differences between rule violators and non-rule violators for criminal offences committed prior to incarceration (Faily, Roundtree & Miller, 1980: 154). In contrast, a Canadian study reported that women offenders with previous convictions were more likely to receive disciplinary charges than first-time offenders. For example, of those who received discipline charges, 30% had no previous convictions compared to 70% who had 5 or more previous convictions (Shaw et al., 1992: 26).

Sentence length has also served as a predictor of prison violence. Women offenders serving short sentences tended to be charged more for disciplinary offences compared to women serving long sentences (Faith, 1993; Shaw, 1991; Shaw & Dubois, 1995). Lindquist (1980: 311) found that inmates in their first year of incarceration were the most frequent offenders of discipline. He suggested that as the length of incarceration increased, the violation of rules became less frequent, but more serious. It may be suggested that the initial period of incarceration represents a time of serious maladjustment; hence, inmates may be more inclined to act out as a coping mechanism.

Finally, research has demonstrated that high security institutions have higher rates of discipline charges (Shaw & Dubois, 1995; Shaw, 1991). For instance,

Mandaraka Sheppard (1986: 107) found that the extent of minor misbehaviour was not significantly different among the five prisons examined. However, there was a significant difference between open and closed prisons in regard to physical violence whereby more serious violence occurred in closed prisons for women. These results are not particularly surprising considering women incarcerated in maximum-security prisons pose a higher risk than women incarcerated in minimum or medium security prisons.

For the most part, the research studies presented above measuring individual variables as causes for prison misconduct provide fairly consistent results. It appears that non-Caucasian, single, young women are more likely to engage in minor or serious misbehaviour while incarcerated than women who are Caucasian, married and older. In addition, short prison sentences and high security classification are moderately associated with committing disciplinary offences. However, in this context, very few explanations are provided for the respective findings, and thus the research to date continues to challenge our interpretation of the data and its relevance to the current population under study.

Environmental Variables

The following is a brief outline of the environmental factors documented as influences of women's behaviour in prison.

In interviews with women offenders at the Prison for Women and provincial institutions, Shaw and colleagues (1992) found that the majority of women felt the rules were "petty and vaguely defined" and disciplinary decisions in court were "unfair or inconsistent" (p. 24). The interview responses signaled the need to address

the extent to which the institution induces problems related to inmate discipline. The authors suggest that much of the problem with discipline is situational. That is, women break the rules because there are so many, they are inconsistently applied, and due to the mere frustration of incarceration. Accordingly, “a system which is perceived by staff to be fair and consistent but by inmates as unjust and inconsistent is unlikely to have the overall effect of maintaining good order” (Shaw et al., 1992: 24). The authors signal the need to consider the context in which violence takes place, that is, the immediate events, triggers or provocations, and historical patterns of events, which cultivate destructive violent behaviour.

The most comprehensive study undertaken on female prison behaviour was conducted by Mandaraka-Sheppard (1986). Using data collected from inmate and staff interviews, observation, and official records in three open and three closed women’s prisons in Britain, the study examined the extent to which individual and institutional characteristics impact on inmate behaviour. She concluded that organization practices and institutional characteristics overrode the effects of individual characteristics such as age, offence history, or a violent background. The study found that severe punishment methods, quality of inmate-staff relations, staff age and experience, and a lack of incentives to good behaviour were the dominant factors that explained discipline charges (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 199). These institutional characteristics “directly affected inmates’ negative attitudes towards the institution which in turn shaped their response towards staff and other inmates” (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 204). She also found evidence of trivial behaviour, vague rules, and prison officer discretion (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 195). For

example, the women interviewed felt that fights and arguments were caused by boredom, provocation, unreasonable or unfair treatment by staff, denial of rights, favouritism, and constant security checks (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 200). Finally, the author discovered a pattern where, based on staff expectations of their likely behaviour, women were labelled as “aggressive” and “dangerous” upon entering the prison. In turn, staff members interpreted women’s actions as hostile and subsequently women resisted their authority (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 200). Women who were physically violent were more likely to interpret staff and even inmate behaviour as a threat to their autonomy and thus they felt the need to defend themselves (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 203). All of these factors contributed to a tense atmosphere and in essence, made it very difficult to develop positive relationships between staff and inmates.

From a Canadian perspective, McDonagh (1999) interviewed 14 non-Aboriginal maximum-security women offenders incarcerated at Prison for Women and Springhill Institution in 1998¹¹. The goal of this study was to address the needs of maximum-security women in an effort to reduce maximum-security classifications. One of the main conclusions drawn was the role of “institutional/structural/organizational” factors and their impact on women’s adjustment to incarceration. There were four themes subsequently developed: institutional climate/culture, physical environment/accommodation, supervision/surveillance, and inmate-staff relations (McDonagh, 1999: 78). The first factor, institutional climate, suggested that the inmate code worsened inmate

¹¹ Aboriginal maximum-security women offenders were interviewed in a separate study. See Morin, 1999.

behaviour, and further, the acceptance and enforcement of this code created group cohesiveness among certain inmates but which created conflict among others (McDonagh, 1999: 78-79). The physical environment or accommodation (i.e., small units, little space, restricted movement) also held the ability to create negative reactions (McDonagh, 1999: 81-82). Interview responses indicated the need to accommodate maximum-security women apart from their medium and minimum-security counterparts. As well, the incompatibility issues between the general population¹² and special needs population¹³ was clearly identified. In relation to this, women respondents raised concerns about the level of appropriate intervention for the special needs population (McDonagh, 1999: 85). Supervision and surveillance in the form of staff presence appeared to reduce the use of drugs and facilitate positive inmate relations (McDonagh, 1999: 86). Finally, negative staff-inmate relations characterized as “disrespectful, intimidating...[and] deliberately provocative” often resulted in conflict and charges (McDonagh, 1999: 88). Although this research was not specifically designed to measure precursors to violence, it identifies some key environmental factors that produce negative adjustment patterns among women offenders designated as maximum-security.

Fox (1982) examined the adaptations of women in confinement noting structural and cultural influences, the changing social climate in women’s prisons, and the reactions and crises emerging from this context. More specifically, he

¹² McDonagh (1999: 8) defines the general population as women with “serious problems regarding anti-social behaviour, criminal attitudes, and institutional adjustment”.

¹³ This population is defined as women with special needs “resulting from serious emotional and mental health issues”, or suffering from “cognitive limitations and basic skill deficits” (McDonagh, 1999: 8).

maintains:

Stress appears to be highly dependent on the interaction of accumulated tension and situational influences. Clearly, individual differences in stress tolerance and the presence of predispositional factors are also at play (Fox, 1982: 211).

In situations where tolerance levels are lowered by cultural expectations and social interactions, individual and collective coping strategies may no longer be effective (Fox, 1982: 211). Although the specific causes of stress-induced crises are difficult, it was clear that stress, tension, and pressure required an immediate release for women. For example, stress emanating from inconsistent rule interpretation and enforcement, and the laggard manner in which inmate requests were processed often resulted in arguments between inmates and staff (Fox, 1982: 211). In addition, staff provocation in the form of insults toward the women's self-esteem and self-image produced aggressive and hostile responses by the women (Fox, 1982: 212). The need to secure respect and status, and separation from their children were also identified as other sources of stress. These situations illustrate the individual responses and adaptations to prison pressures and stresses experienced by women offenders. The degree to which these stresses produced violent behaviour was only briefly explored, but nonetheless provides an introductory explanation in how such behaviour may originate.

Stevens (1998) explored female prisonization¹⁴ effects – those factors associated with the deprivation model¹⁵. The prison regime was clearly indicative of violence as explained by the author: “the prison regime was restrictive and that it

¹⁴ Prisonization refers to the “taking on in greater or less degree of the folkways, mores, customs, and general culture of the penitentiary (Clemmer, 1966: 299).

¹⁵ See Chapter 2.

added to their culture of violence fueling their anticipated choices of violent behaviour” (Stevens, 1998: 198). The circumstances described by the women in this sample were reflective of an authoritarian regime characterized by restricted movement, rigid supervision, limited access or opportunities, and negative staff-inmate relations (Stevens, 1998: 198-199). As a result, women’s perceptions of the regime were determined to be the best predictor for their own anticipation of violent crimes. However, this precipitation of violence was discussed in reference to violent crimes upon release rather than violence while incarcerated.

Jones (1993) examined the adaptive responses in a sample of women prisoners in the United States. The experiences of women were explained in terms of the pains of imprisonment where the most restrictive and intrusive conditions of custody were threats to an individual self-image and personal worth (Jones: 1993: 77). It was discovered that uncertainty or inconsistency in the official rules and expectations was one of the primary deprivations encountered (Jones, 1993: 77-78). Furthermore, the women identified that a lack of trust of inmates generated concern for their physical safety and the potential for verbal altercations (Jones, 1993: 79). However, no specific reference was made to how these adaptive responses developed into or produced violence. Primarily, adaptation to this type of social isolation was referred to as the women’s reliance on relationships such as the “quasi-family”, “couple”, or “rap-partner” (Jones, 1993: 84-92). Although distinct from one another, these relationships represented support, respect, and trust for the women. One type of adaptive response to imprisonment was termed “going it alone” however very few women were considered part of this group. These inmates were thought to do their

own time by isolating themselves from others due to issues of mistrust and certain expectations of prison violence (Jones, 1993: 92-93). This group was not explored in further detail.

Overall, there have been consistent conclusions made regarding the type of environmental or situational factors to influence women offenders' behaviour in prison. Many of the studies concluded that inconsistent rules and unclear expectations about acceptable prison behaviour were sources of conflict. Further to this, it was strongly emphasized that negative staff-inmate relationships were causes of misbehaviour. More specifically, this included staff provocation, unfair treatment by staff, reactive responses to inmate requests, and threats to inmate autonomy or self image. Some studies also found that the enforcement of rigid supervision and surveillance produced negative reactions by women offenders. The research clearly demonstrated the importance of institutional and organizational factors and their potential to affect the environmental climate of the prison.

Although the study by McDonagh (1999) was not to explicitly explore violence in institutions, the experiences of maximum-security women were able to provide ample insight into this phenomenon. Croteau (2000) also provided further understanding about various forms of violence in the provincial system. The other, more out-dated studies detailing environmental influences once again do not purposively investigate violent women perpetrators in prison, yet have come to some conclusions about this population through their primary research questions and methodological approaches. However, these conclusions must be interpreted with caution due to their limited explanations about women's violence, as well as the

relatively weak investigation of the causes of violence in this context. One further problem associated with these studies is the varying definitions of violence, as well as the different terms used to explain prison behaviour, namely, maladjustment, misbehaviour, misconduct, conflict, aggression, discipline, and violence.

The literature presented here reveals several gaps in the knowledge base surrounding this subject. With the exception of one study conducted in Britain (see Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986), the research has only briefly addressed prison behaviour. Moreover, very few specific references to violent behaviour in prison have been discussed in relation to females, and when it has been addressed, such behaviour has been documented as indicative of stress or maladjustment. Furthermore, there is little attention paid to the precursors of violence, prevention strategies, or intervention targets. Studies have placed greater emphasis on minor misbehaviour, comparisons between male and female behaviour, and the individual characteristics of women perpetrators. In an effort to fill these gaps in the literature, this study explores the nature and extent of serious, violent behaviour by women offenders in prison. In addition to examining the individual characteristics of women perpetrators, it traces the environmental or situational factors that influence such behaviour. From this analysis, it is hoped that relevant policy and practice implications can emerge. The continuing reintegration issues presented by women offenders who use violence in prison, the genuine concern generated among correctional officials about this population, and the dearth of effective responses to manage this violence, precisely demonstrate the need for this particular type of

investigation. The following theory and methodology sections further detail the framework for this investigation.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The existing theoretical propositions explaining women's violence have been limited in both content and applicability. In particular, there is a dearth of knowledge and theoretical frameworks concerning violence instigated by women offenders while incarcerated. The following discussion will examine feminist theory, theories of prison adjustment, and theory of sex differences in aggression. The main tenets of each theoretical perspective, their relation or application to women's prison violence, as well as their limitations are explored for the purposes of suggesting new routes for theoretical development and practical utility.

These theoretical perspectives were selected to explain women's violence in prison for reasons independent of each other. Feminist theory is necessary for an analysis of gender and power relations, and to acknowledge women's experiences both as victims and victimizers. Theories of prison adjustment are central to this discussion as violent behaviour is often a measure of adjustment in prison and therefore this examination leads to inquiry regarding the factors that influence this type of adjustment. In the previous literature reviewed, it became evident that men and women are often compared in terms of their behaviour in prisons, and notably how these behaviours differ from one another. As a result, it is important to explore not only the potential of women to have *different* uses, motivations, and expressions of violence apart from men, but also to demonstrate any *similarities* that may exist between the sexes. This investigation provides a theoretically comprehensive and

thorough explanation of violence perpetrated by women in prison, and which will be further validated with the results presented in this study.

Feminist Criminology and Women's Violence

Feminist criminology has long acknowledged women's position in society and sought to elucidate the experiences of women in conflict with the law. Feminist criminologists¹⁶ have continued to challenge the sexist treatment of women by the criminal justice system, the sexism of traditional criminological theories, and the concept of victimless crimes (i.e., prostitution) (Gavigan, 1993: 215). Further to this, feminist criminology has explored the social representations, images, stereotypes, and labels attributed to women who are violent (Frigon, 1995) including the polarized images of women as mad versus bad¹⁷, and madonna versus whore¹⁸. It has critically examined the disciplinary or social control mechanisms of women including criminalization, sexualization, and psychiatrization (Frigon, 1995). In addition, feminism has developed new methodological approaches such as employing the concepts of reflexivity and subjectivity, applying sensitive and egalitarian research, and emphasizing the value of qualitative research (Gelsthorpe, 1990: 2). The strength of feminist criminology lies in its sensitivity to women's actual lived experiences and its emphasis on women's social, racial, and economic status in society.

Another important contribution of feminist theory has been its critique of

¹⁶ It is important to note that there are various strands or paradigms of feminism, namely liberal, radical, cultural, and marxist-socialist. However, limited space prevents an in-depth discussion of each paradigm.

¹⁷ See Heidensohn (1985).

¹⁸ See Jeffreys (1985).

male-centered criminological theories which have tended to use an ‘add women and stir’ approach to understanding female aggression by generalizing their findings on male aggression to the female population. The discipline has further criticized sex-specific theories which generally include evolutionary and biological explanations whereby violent attributes and tendencies are linked to genetics and hormonal differences (White & Kowalski, 1994: 500).

Segments of feminist theories have also attempted to explain the socially constructed meanings of aggression and the meanings that constrain such aggression and its expression. Ultimately, feminist theories have emphasized “the need to understand female violence in terms of the status of women in society – to reveal, acknowledge, and define it from the woman’s perspective” (White & Kowalski, 1994: 501), taking into consideration the intersection of race, class, and gender. Finally, with patriarchy at the center of its argument, feminist theory has asserted that women’s aggression is judged more harshly because it deviates from socially expected roles and norms (White & Kowalski, 1994; Faith, 1993).

While the contributions of feminism cannot be understated, there are several limitations that need to be addressed. First, the overwhelmingly majority of the literature within feminist criminology has focused on violence against women (Lloyd, 1995; Denov, in press). Women have been largely viewed in terms of their victim status, rather than as perpetrators or instigators of violence. As such, the patterns and causes of female aggression and violence have been relatively unexplored with the exception of homicide occurring in interpersonal relationships. This discussion has

been primarily contextualized as a response to an abusive relationship or to past abusive experiences (Shaw and Dubois, 1995):

For feminists, for professionals who work with women who have been victimized, for criminologists, perhaps for all women, however, it is difficult to talk about women as perpetrators of violence, except in terms of their own reactions to victimization: the battered women who hit back (Shaw, 1995: 116).

The predominant focus on violence against women has oversimplified our explanations and understanding about women and violence as we continue to portray and idealize women as helpless victims (Dell, 2001; Shaw, 1995). While proposing strong paradigms of victimization, feminist criminologists have failed to acknowledge the agency of women and their potential to engage in violent and abusive behaviour (Dell, 2001; Denov, 2000; Gelsthorpe, 1999; Birch, 1993). Moreover, Denov (2000) has noted that feminist explanations that equate all forms of women's violence to male power and patriarchy do not adequately explain a range of issues and behaviours, including child sexual abuse perpetrated by females. Denov writes:

The mere existence of a lone woman who sexually abuses children appears to invalidate feminist explanations of sexual assault, undermining the core aspect of feminist theory – patriarchy and its role in the subordination of women (Denov, 2000: 197)¹⁹.

In this way, feminist theories appear to restrict the potential of females to be sexually aggressive outside the context of male domination, control, and power. A similar argument can be made in cases whereby women offenders use violence against other women in prison. Although, these actions defy the common stereotypes or myths of

¹⁹ Denov (2000) acknowledges that female sex offenders may be victims of male coercion (a form of male power and domination) but speaks in reference to the inability of feminist theory to explain women who sexually abuse children on their own accord.

the non-aggressive woman, it is important to acknowledge the occurrence of power relations amongst women and their experiences as responsible, active agents.

To both accept and dispel the myth of the non-aggressive and non-violent woman has been a significant challenge for feminism (Pearson, 1997; Shaw, 1995; Birch, 1993). Further, feminist analysis addressing women's use of violence has been described as "partial", "fragmented", and "disjointed" (Renzetti, 1999: 46). As a result, the phenomenon of female aggression has gone "unnoticed", and thus "unnamed" (White & Kowalski, 1994: 488). While some feminist authors duly acknowledge that women can be both victims and victimizers (Dell, 2001; Shaw, 2000; Pearson, 1997; Heidensohn, 1995; Shaw & Dubois, 1995; Faith, 1993), few have addressed violence committed by women in prison:

Feminist discussions have hardly touched on women in prison...imprisoning women does raise some very difficult issues for feminists...as in so many things, women have lacked voices and have been punished not just for wrongdoing but also for not keeping to their proper places (Heidensohn, 1995: 83).

Not only has there been very little acknowledgment of violence by women in prison, but there has been few distinctions made with regard to violent convictions and violence inside institutions (Vanneste, 1995: 4; Shaw & Dubois, 1995: 35). This differentiation is important because research has indicated that offenders who are convicted of murder or are serving long sentences are less likely to be charged with discipline offences in prison (Shaw & Dubois, 1995: 35). Furthermore, women in prison encounter a unique set of circumstances, both individual and environmental, than women in the general population. This context must be explored including the events, triggers, and motivations in which this particular type of aggression is

expressed. In addition to this, any further discussion on women's violence, both inside and outside prison, has tended to be framed in terms of violence against the self. Women offenders have been characterized as frequent perpetrators of their own self-injury, self-mutilation, and self-destruction (Pearson, 1997: 23). However, this behaviour itself is not seen as inherently aggressive or violent because it is not "willful, controlled, or directed" (Pearson, 1997: 21). Finally, much of this self-directed violent behaviour is often attributed to eating disorders, abuse, and social coercion rather than to their own aggressive tendencies and characteristics (Pearson, 1997: 23).

There are, however, explanations offered for the lack of attention directed toward violence perpetrated by women, although these reasons may not necessarily extend to the failure to address violence by women in prison specifically. Such explanations include a low rate of female crime, lack of public pressure, low social threat, and the relatively minor nature of their behaviour (Heidensohn, 1995:125). Shaw & Dubois (1995) suggest that violence by women has been ignored partly due to the fact that both traditionally and presently, men have been the primary instigators of violence. Alternatively, there has been a "very legitimate focus on violence against women and the need to sensitize society to its extent and seriousness" (Shaw & Dubois, 1995: 5). Some may be concerned about the potential to undermine efforts regarding violence against women or that such research could be distorted or exaggerated to serve anti-feminist objectives (Denov, 2000). Furthermore, by undermining the contribution of the women's movement, attention is diverted from male violence, and subsequently, the undesirable qualities of women are emphasized

(White & Kowalski, 1994). However, the consequences of this neglect are concisely summarized in the following comments:

To avoid consideration of violence by women encourages a “backlash” effect where some investigators feel challenged to “prove” that women are just as violent as men, it contributes to the fiction that women who are violent must somehow be extraordinary freaks, it denies women any agency or choice in their lives, but perhaps most crucially, it leaves society and the justice system with little understanding of their behaviour, or guidance on how we should react to them or help them (Shaw & Dubois, 1995: 5).

The continued neglect of the study of women’s violence will not expand our knowledge and understanding about the characteristics and motivations of offenders. Therefore, the misconceptions and stereotypes about women’s behaviour are reinforced (Denov, 2000, 2001, 2003; White & Kowalski, 1994). Victims and offenders are not acknowledged, and the agency of women is ultimately denied.

This discussion does not imply that we should reject the fundamental tenets of feminist criminology, nor to disavow the major contributions of this discipline. Instead, it suggests the potential for it to be altered or adapted in order to provide a plausible theoretical framework for women who use violence in various forms including the prison environment. Researchers have insisted on the development of a single feminist theory of aggression (Renzetti, 1999; White & Kowalski, 1994). Undoubtedly, feminists may be the most appropriately situated to develop such a theoretical framework (Renzetti, 1999). Most importantly, it is necessary that we understand that “acknowledging the reality of female aggression is not inconsistent with feminist goals” (White & Kowalski, 1994: 503). A feminist analysis of violence will continue to acknowledge the role of gender, recognize the role of patriarchy and

power, and maintain respect for individual differences (Renzetti, 1999; White & Kowalski, 1994).

Unfortunately, feminism, in its current form, appears unable to effectively explain violence committed by women, both in general, and specifically by women in prison. Feminism falls short in explaining women's offence profiles (violence in crimes) and further in explaining women's use of violence in prison. Therefore, it is imperative to examine other relevant theoretical perspectives regarding violent women perpetrators. Such explanations for female prison violence can be extracted from theories on prison adjustment.

Theories of Prison Adjustment

Historically, there have been two primary theoretical models to explain adjustment to prison. The deprivation and importation models have competed against one another in their basic assumptions about human behaviour and the internal and external forces that shape this behaviour. Each attempts to explain the process of prisonization or assimilation, inmate social structure, and the individual or collective responses to this system. The assumptions in each of these models have also been combined to create an integrative model of prison adjustment. Finally, a fourth theoretical perspective has been introduced in the literature to focus upon the management practices in prison.

To date, there is no specific theory on violence in prison – this phenomenon is typically measured through the various prepositions of these prison adjustment models. In general, the main argument is that poor adjustment to the prison

environment via the influence of individual and/or environmental factors predisposes one to disruptive and violent behaviour while incarcerated. This type of behaviour is only one of a number of measures of adjustment – others may include adoption or rejection of the inmate subculture, self injury or suicide, program and activity participation, psychological well-being, and so on. Throughout the literature, institutional behaviour has been a consistent measure of adjustment to prison (Toch & Adams, 2002). As stated, “for over 30 years, disciplinary data has remained the most valid, reliable, readily available, and detailed information on prison adjustment” (DeRosia, 1998: 27).

Deprivation Model

The main tenets of the deprivation model assert that adaptations to prison are the result of intra-institutional processes and influences, or namely prison specific variables, that are inherently produced by the experience of imprisonment (Goffman, 1961; Sykes, 1958). According to Sykes (1958), there were a total of five “pains of imprisonment” which included the deprivations of liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy, and security. The social structure or system of the prison is formed according to the inmates’ reactions and responses to these pains or hardships. In this context, violent behaviour can be viewed as a coping response to these deprivations; a method for adapting to the power and social structures that restrains and oppresses the individual. The use of violence also serves the purpose of deterring others by demonstrating “toughness” and maintaining self image against insults (Edgar, O’Donnell, & Martin, 2003: 4). Research that has tested this particular model has examined the amount of time served in prison, interpersonal

involvement and social roles, and type of institution and organizational structure (Zamble & Porporino, 1988: 7).

Importation Model

In the importation model, adaptation to prison is influenced by pre-prison socialization and experiences (Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Clemmer, 1966). The prison subculture or social structure is a direct result of the individual characteristics learned and acquired *prior* to entering prison. These social and personal factors bring forward a criminal subculture of ideals, attitudes, behaviours, values, and meanings to the environment. Related to this, is the concept of prisonization as defined by Clemmer (1966: 299), which is the process through which inmates adopt the attitudes and values of the prison culture and subsequently adhere to the inmate code. This assimilation serves as both a socialization mechanism and an adjustment response. The inmate code, an extension of the criminal subculture, shapes inmate conduct, therefore breaches of this code result in conflict (Edgar, O'Donnell, & Martin, 2003: 4). In this instance, the different criminal subcultures brought into the prison culture are largely associated with the use of violence and aggression. Therefore, violent behaviour and attitudes may develop for some but intensify for others in this type of setting. Pre-prison variables include social and criminal history, degree of identification with pro-criminal attitudes and values, and association with political, racial, and religious ideologies (Zamble & Porporino, 1988: 8)²⁰.

²⁰ For a more extensive discussion on pre-prison variables or influences, refer to the literature review contained in this thesis.

Integrative Model

Other theorists have proposed an integrative or interactionist model of prison adjustment (Zamble & Porporino, 1988; Thomas, 1977). These authors assert that the majority of past research has neglected the interaction between internal and external determinants and therefore have failed to examine how aspects of the environment affect individuals and how personal characteristics react to external stimuli (Zamble & Porporino, 1988: 2). For these theorists, it appears more sensible to argue that the models of deprivation and importation are theoretically complementary and compatible (Thomas, 1977). As stated:

We can conclude that there are few internal dispositions that are so powerful as to uniquely determine actions in all situations, and few environmental events that can compel identical responses from people of every disposition...We would expect that the interaction between individuals and situations will be the most powerful predictor of behaviour (Zamble & Porporino, 1988: 4).

The general conclusion within this theoretical perspective is to combine and integrate both sides of the argument. The authors urge that we must recognize and acknowledge that although the environment may not directly cause certain behaviours, actions also cannot be predicted from certain individual characteristics alone. Instead, it is the way in which we experience our environments, both past and present, that produces individual differences in responding and reacting to different situations and stimuli (Zamble & Porporino, 1988: 4).

To the author's knowledge, no research has specifically tested this model on a population of women offenders. However, the significance of its tenets to prison violence has been acknowledged in both academic and professional literature:

To understand violence in prisons we need to consider the context in which violence takes place, and this includes both immediate events or triggers and historical patterns of events. We should study the characteristics of prison regimes, particularly staff-inmate relationships, staff training, staff experience and staff morale (Shaw, 2000: 65).

As well, this concern is echoed in the correctional community:

There are a number of situational and environmental factors which are considered to contribute to tension and enhance the potential for violent acting out (CSC, 1995b: 18)

Increasingly, it is recognized that the role of the institution and its interconnecting elements, represent the origins of unsuccessful implementation of correctional approaches and strategies for women offenders. The consequences periodically manifest themselves through violent and aggressive behaviour. Although the pains of imprisonment for women offenders are conceptualized within a separate sphere from their male counterparts, they are often considered to affect women in specific and monumental ways (Shaw, 1999; Fox, 1982). The ways in which these effects relate to violence have not been thoroughly documented.

These models have, for the most part, been tested on male offender populations with very little consistent results found with regard to their applicability or effectiveness in explaining violent behaviour (DeRosia, 1998; Zamble & Porporino, 1998). The research conducted on female offenders with regard to prison adjustment is largely outdated, based on an American or British context, and continues to bear the same assumptions about female behaviour as asserted in earlier criminological research. For example, the literature continues to emphasize female prison adjustment with regard to the formation of family or pseudofamilial structures, lesbian relationships, and/or emotional and sexual bonds (Van Wormer, 1978;

Mitchell, 1969; Giallombardo, 1966; Ward & Kassebaum, 1965). More importantly, there is a substantial gap in knowledge about how these models can explain prison maladjustment in the form of violent behaviour among women offenders.

Management Perspective²¹

A final theoretical approach to explaining prison adjustment, or alternatively violence and disorder in prison, is the management perspective (DiIulio, 1987). This approach asserts that “prison violence, both individual and collective, is the result of *failed prison management*: security lapses, high staff turnover and a lack of discipline among guards, unlocked doors, unsearched inmates and crowds not quickly dispersed” (McCorkle, Miethe & Drass, 1995: 320). According to this perspective, factors related to organizational structure and management strategies appear to determine prison order, and alternatively, improving on these techniques or situations can effectively control the prison environment (McCorkle, Miethe, & Drass, 1995: 320). In testing this theory on a sample of male offenders, other measures such as guard-inmate ratio, guard turnover rate, ratio of White-Black correctional staff, program involvement, and institutional size were included (McCorkle, Miethe, & Drass, 1995: 324). Based on results from this study, it was confirmed that “poor prison management is a major structure condition that fails to control, and may promote, individual acts of violence in prison” (McCorkle, Miethe, & Drass, 1995: 329). Furthermore, institutional programs were found to be an effective management tool in that participation lowered rates of assaults. This was viewed as offering

²¹ The management perspective as described by DiIulio (1987) may be argued not as a theory in itself, but a perspective that provides an explanation for the occurrence of violence and disorder in prison.

inmates structure in their daily living, an avenue for self-improvement, and anticipation of rewards or benefits (McCorkle, Miethe, & Drass, 1995: 328).

It is also important to recognize that there may be different or additional management related factors that affect female prison violence specifically as it is not known by the author whether this theory has been explicitly tested on a female offender population. However, some authors examining women's behaviour in prison have concluded that "prison regimes and management practices themselves play a significant part in [the] production" of disciplinary problems (Shaw et al., 1992: 25-26). Furthermore, Faith (1993) has noted that "ultimately, the success of an institutional staff in maintaining order and discipline depends in large part on the stability, philosophy and management practices of the administration" (Faith, 1993: 166). Despite these conclusions, the role of institutional staff and management are rarely explored as precursors to violence in this context.

Sex Differences in Aggression

Further to the discussion on how women respond and adapt to the institutional environment, it has been proposed that males and females use aggression for different purposes. As noted earlier, it is important to acknowledge that men and women differ on a number of dimensions with respect to behaviour and attitudes. This is reiterated by Heidensohn:

It follows that any adequate theory of crime and delinquency must include an explanation of sex differences in crime rates (Heidensohn, 1995: 143).

The theory of sex differences in aggression originated in the arguments of Campbell and Muncer (1987; 1994). They used the term "social representations of aggression"

(from Moscovici, 1984) to describe the thoughts and feelings related to aggression. For males, aggression is viewed as instrumental in that it is exercised to control others. For females, aggression is expressive as it is viewed as a loss of control. It is argued that these two social representations are linked to differences in verbal and physical aggression among the sexes whereby male aggression is more prominent (Campbell & Muncer, 1994). This assertion is evidenced in the research literature where “some speculate that the high rate of suicide attempts, cell destruction, and self mutilation among women prisoners is the result of women’s tendency to internalize anger, while incarcerated men are more likely to externalize anger by assaulting other prisoners or prison staff” (Belknap, 2001: 173).

In examining female violence in prison and its related purpose, it is necessary to explore whether this pattern of differences exists in the population under study. More specifically, this particular theoretical perspective may lend itself to confirming the purpose of violence used by incarcerated women and dispute the notion that violence is exercised for purely “expressive” reasons.

Every now and then, when scholars in criminology and sociology concede the possibility of female aggression, they hasten to add that women only engage in “expressive” aggression, which means giving vent impulsively to bottled-up feelings. Women do not, these scholars maintain, engage in “instrumental” aggression, the kind that is cool and calculating. By maintaining this distinction between impulsive and strategic violence, the basic paradigm of female virtue holds (Pearson, 1997: 15).

As some authors suggest, the social representations of aggression may not necessarily illustrate a dualism of the concept, but for all reasonable purposes, the two sets of beliefs may be integrated to some form and extent unknown to researchers (Archer & Haigh, 1997: 405).

A review of the theoretical perspectives demonstrates the lack of knowledge and theory in the area of women's violence generally and women's violence in prison more specifically. The lack of research by feminist criminologists on the topic illustrates the need to recognize women as perpetrators of violence rather than solely as victims. This violence also extends beyond intimate relationships and actions against the self. Models of prison adjustment indicate that an integration of theory may provide the most comprehensive explanation of prison violence. Women's adjustment to prison conditions may be the result of a multifaceted relationship between individual, environmental, and perhaps even, management related factors. However, such conclusions about the applicability of these models to women's violence in prison can only be made with further inquiry. As such, this study provides an avenue to explore the extent to which these theories can adequately explain this phenomenon and if necessary, what variations in the models or factors must be made for this specific population. Furthermore, this investigation serves as an opportunity to explicate the common assumption that men and women use violence for different purposes. As presented in the following chapter, the methodological approach and the preceding results, will attempt to extrapolate and determine the relevance of these theoretical perspectives to women who use violence in prison.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This research examines the nature and extent of violence among an incarcerated women offender population, as well as a number of individual and environmental variables relating to this violence. This examination has been conducted using quantitative data from an incident and offender database followed by qualitative data in the form of in-depth interviews with women offenders who have committed violent incidents while incarcerated in the federal correctional system.

As mentioned, this descriptive and exploratory study involves the careful and complimentary linking of two research methodologies. This is commonly referred to as triangulation, which is defined as the use of multiple methods and sources to investigate the same phenomena. Within the parameters of this research, the technique of triangulation enabled for the interactive and simultaneous integration of primary and secondary research data from two sources. As will be outlined, both sets of data are related to different but associated research questions. It was determined that for the purposes of this study, the use of incident records and offenders files would not provide a fully comprehensive and accurate picture of female prison violence. The inclusion of interviews was prompted by the need to elucidate women's personal constructions and definitions of violent experiences and their perspectives of this process and context (Bryman, 1992: 64). The combination of these methods was intended to thoroughly capture the nature and extent of violence among women offenders.

There are several advantages to triangulation. The dominant value of this approach proposed by most researchers is its ability to increase or improve the validity and efficacy of the research (Brannen, 1992; Bryman, 1992). By converging and comparing results based on two data sources, the capacity of the research to identify inconsistencies or contradictory findings is enhanced. As a result, this may lead to the emergence of fresh perspectives of the data and the identification of gaps in the research. The concept of triangulation is based on the assumption that “any bias inherent in particular data sources, investigator, and method would be neutralized when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators, methods” (Jick, 1979 in Creswell, 1994: 174). Beyond the basic claim of enhancing validity, a multi-method approach has the potential to “highlight the fragmented and multi-faceted nature of human consciousness” (Brannen, 1992: 31). This refers to the complimentary and integrative nature of triangulation in which overlapping and different levels or angles of a phenomenon in an interactive and complex environment can be explored. In conclusion: “numbers and words are both needed if we are to understand the world” (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 40).

Quantitative Methodology

Research Questions

The primary research question for this study is “what is the nature and extent of prison violence perpetrated by federally incarcerated women offenders?” More specifically, this study examines the rate of violent incidents committed in federal institutions from January 1st 1995 to December 31st 2001. A number of incident variables are explored, as well as the distribution of violent incidents among federal

institutions for women. The secondary research question is “what is the profile of women who commit violent incidents in federal correctional institutions?” Several individual characteristics of women offenders will be examined including socio-demographics, mental health, offence characteristics, sentence length, and criminal history.

Data Source

The quantitative data source utilized for this study is the Offender Management System (OMS) of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). The Offender Management System is a computer-based application that records and stores case files on all federal offenders in Canada. This automated database contains information on offender penitentiary placement, intake assessment, case management, sentence management, security classification, program participation, and inmate grievances. There are approximately 5500 registered users of the database across the national, regional, and district institutions. Several other federal organizations have access to the system including the National Parole Board (NPB), The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and to a lesser extent, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). The system has been fully operational since November 1994 (CSC, 1996b).

The OMS database was selected as a primary data source for two reasons. First, OMS is the only offender management database in Canada which provides detailed information on incidents in federal correctional institutions. Other data sources on federal offenders such as Inmate Committees and The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies do not possess a comprehensive system of data records such as the information that was required for this research. Moreover, the

above named organizations obtain a large majority of their statistics from CSC. As additional support, there have been several research studies on women offenders, which have successfully analyzed and interpreted data extracted from OMS (Dell, Sinclair & Boe, 2001; Irving & Wichmann, 2001; Blanchette, 1997; Loucks & Zamble, n.d.). Second, the National Headquarters of CSC granted the researcher access to the Offender Management System²².

Recording Incidents

The Commissioner's Directive 620 dictates that all institutional security incidents must be recorded in OMS. Incidents are defined as "events which have resulted in death, serious bodily injury or disturbance of usual operational activities through deliberate intent or an act of violence by one or more offenders" (CSC, 1999: 2). Incidents are considered either minor or major. Major incidents may include murder, assault, inmate fight, major disturbance, captive and barricade situations (i.e., hostage-taking), suicide, self-inflicted injury, escape from an institution or CSC escort, and fire setting (CSC, 1998:1-2). Specific to this research, a list of incident definitions according to CSC policy is included in Appendix D.

When an incident occurs in a federal institution, the investigating officer must complete an automated incident report, which records information such as incident type, date and time, facility and location, use of weapons, and property damage. Incidents are classified as either minor or major according to the investigating officer.

²² A research proposal was submitted to the Research Branch of CSC. This request was approved by the Director General of the Research Branch. The Director of Women Offender Research and the Women Offender Sector of CSC were also notified of this research. After approval, a letter by the Criminology Department of the University of Ottawa was sent to the Research Branch of CSC regarding access to and use of secondary research data and all corresponding ethical issues.

The officer's decision is based on the circumstances surrounding the incident including intent, physical and psychological injury, and official reports regarding the incident (CSC, 1995a: 2). A major level of injury or serious bodily injury must be recorded for an incident to be classified as major. Serious bodily injury is defined as "any harm which endangers life or which results in permanent physical impairment, significant disfigurement or protracted loss of normal functioning" (CSC, 1998: 1). Major security incidents (i.e., murder) must be recorded by the next working day and within three days for all other incidents (CSC, 1995a).

The policy on recording and reporting security incidents was recently amended in January 2003 (Refer to CSC, 2003)²³. These amendments included revisions to incident definitions, the addition of responsibility and procedure guidelines, further determination of serious bodily injury, and detailed reporting procedures. However, the specifics of this policy will not be outlined here since it has not been operationalized by correctional staff until this time.

Advantages of Statistics

Quantitative measures are "succinct, parsimonious and easily aggregated" for analysis (Patton, 2002: 20). The long-standing argument for the use of official statistics is rooted in its confidence to measure serious criminal behaviour and to establish validity and reliability as opposed to self-report techniques which are highly susceptible to respondent bias (Hindelang, Hirschi, & Weis, 1981: 14). More specific to this research, the use of descriptive or univariate statistics provide an avenue to

²³ Several other policies relating to security incidents have also been recently amended. Refer to CSC, 2002a.

explicitly present and describe single variables in a manageable but detailed form (Maxfield & Babbie, 1998: 354).

Limitations of the Data

While the Offender Management System may be an important data source for this study, it has several limitations. First, the data may not be as accurate or impartial as expected because the data may be a reflection of the institutional practices of the organization under study. For example, there may be great variation between the federal institutions and correctional staff members who report and record incidents on a daily basis. Second, there is a large amount of discretion exercised by staff members who report incidents and subsequently record information into OMS. It is realistic to assume that human error, professional bias, and personal values have the potential to influence the data. In this case, it difficult to know the extent to which correctional officers consistently and objectively apply institutional rules and the degree to which investigating officers follow policies and procedures when reporting incidents. Further to this, incident definitions and reporting procedures have changed over the last six years highlighting the potential for variation in application. Third, the recording of incidents is highly susceptible to under-reporting especially if the incidents are minor in nature. Staff members may feel that they should not consume their time by recording relatively minor incidents. Interestingly, research has found that female offenders are more likely to be charged for minor incidents than male offenders (Shaw, 1991; Lindquist, 1980). This may indicate that incidents committed by women offenders are over-reported because correctional officials may be less tolerant of women breaking institutional rules with the view that

females are in greater violation of social norms and behavioural expectations than their male counterparts. Alternatively, women offenders themselves may not report incidents to officials in fear of reprisal by their perpetrator(s).

Research Sample

Data were obtained for violent incidents which involved one or more instigators who have committed the incident (n=373). A profile of women perpetrating these incidents was also retrieved. This sample includes federally sentenced women who have perpetrated violent incidents in correctional institutions (n=256). This includes women offenders who have committed one or more violent incidents between 1995 and 2001. All of the women were at some time incarcerated at either one or more of the four regional facilities, one Aboriginal healing lodge, four co-located units in the male penitentiaries, and/or the Prison for Women (Refer to Appendix C)²⁴. The data do not include federally sentenced women who are under Exchange of Service Agreements (ESA)²⁵ in provincial institutions. Federally sentenced women are assessed at intake into federal custody; however, provincial institutions do not regularly collect and record information on offenders into OMS therefore offender records are not updated consistently. With the inclusion of these particular women, data would be missing in future analyses for relevant variables such as risk and security levels.

²⁴ Women offenders incarcerated at Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women (British Columbia), a provincial institution, and Isabel McNeil House (Ontario), a federal minimum security facility were not included in the data.

²⁵ Exchange of Service Agreements (ESA) are mandated by Section 16 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (1992) whereby federal offenders may serve their term of incarceration in a provincial correctional facility.

Time Frame

Incident data have been retrieved from OMS from January 1st 1995 to December 31st 2001. This time period was selected because it occurs slightly after OMS came into operation in 1994. The seven-year time frame chosen seeks to capture the overall nature of offender behaviour over time, to examine substantial changes in behaviour, as well as, to account for the transition from the Prison for Women to the regional facilities.

Data Analysis

All quantitative data concerning violent incidents and the offender profile have been analyzed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS)²⁶. The primary analysis examines all violent incidents for the time period specified above. For the purposes of this research, violent incidents are defined as physical acts of violence committed by one or more inmates against one or more staff members, inmates, or visitors. This includes: murder, hostage-taking, hostage-taking with sexual assault, forcible confinement with sexual assault, major disturbance, inmate fights, and assault. To avoid exaggeration in the occurrence of incidents and due to changes in the offending population, the incident data will be expressed as a rate. For this rate, the average population each year will be calculated in order to control for changes in the population over a seven-year time frame.

Research has demonstrated that women are more likely to act alone rather

²⁶ The Statistical Analysis System (SAS) is a computer-based software program that enables users to manipulate data according to the objectives of the study (SAS Institute Inc., 1991).

than in a group (Shaw & Dubois, 1995). This finding supports the need to examine the number of women involved in violent incidents for each year, as one woman may be involved more than once in the overall violent incident rate or, alternatively, several women could be involved in a single incident. This is also done to avoid exaggeration of women's involvement in violent incidents. This analysis demonstrates the extent to which the same women engage in violent behaviour, and equally, the degree to which women act as a collective group or as an individual perpetrator.

The distribution of violent incidents in each institution, including four regional facilities, one healing lodge, and four co-located units in male penitentiaries, are examined. This analysis is especially relevant to the women offender population given the developments and transformations that have occurred in women's corrections over the last six years. Federally sentenced women have been transferred from the Prison for Women into the regional facilities, only to have a proportion of the population transferred into the units located in male federal institutions or to return to the Prison for Women. While no causal inferences will be drawn, it is important to speculate about the effects of this disruption on inmate behaviour and relationships with staff members and other inmates.

For offenders who have been perpetrators of an incident, information on their demographics, mental health, offence category, sentence length, and criminal history are explored. If an offender has committed more than one incident, information on their most recent incident will be obtained for the following variables: security classification (i.e., minimum, medium, maximum) and risk level (i.e., low, medium,

high). These variables are important to explore as research has indicated that age, race, marital status, sentence length, and security level are related to violent behaviour in prison (Shaw & Dubois, 1995; Shaw, 1991; Shaw et al., 1992).

More specific information on the incidents will be retrieved from the database such as level of injury and harm, weapon use, physical methods, property damage, and factors or indicators for incidents.

Qualitative Methodology

Research Question

The data collected from the interviews intended to explore the question: “what are the experiences and perspectives of violent women perpetrators with regard to prison violence?” The qualitative data will be used to validate and elaborate on the quantitative data collected on violent incidents and women perpetrators, and to elucidate upon the interaction between individual and environmental factors within the same social context.

Advantages of Interviews

Interviews provide rich and holistic meaning to the natural, lived experiences of individuals and reveal the complexity, truth, and reality of those complex social experiences (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 10). Semi-structured, open-ended interviews enable the researcher to understand and capture the perceptions, feelings, and knowledge of the interviewee without predetermining those points of view through the prior selection of response categories (Patton, 2002: 21). Women offenders are offered the valuable opportunity to provide their own perspectives and experiences on

how and why they are violent in the correctional setting. Women are given a voice, and more importantly, they will be heard as a separate entity from their male counterparts.

Limitations of the Data²⁷

There are some limitations of conducting interviews which are important to acknowledge. First, interviews do not provide definitive answers but rather suggest modes of interpreting data subjectively. As such, the results can not be generalized or inferred to the wider population under study. The absolute reliability of the interviews must be questioned due to the possibility that the offenders may have mitigated or exaggerated their involvement in violence. However, it is hoped that by developing trust and rapport with the respondents during the interviews, it will deter any desire to falsify events and increase their willingness to divulge information. The memory of the participants may also represent a threat to reliability as some of the women were asked to recall events from the last six years.

Accessing Participants for Interviews

Using the information contained in the incident database, a list of potential interview candidates was assembled. There were three criteria for inclusion in the study: federally sentenced women who committed three or more violent incidents²⁸ as an instigator; the incidents occurred between January 1st 1995 and December 31st

²⁷ At the time of this research, the author was employed as a student with the Research Branch of CSC. It must be acknowledged that there is the potential for this role in CSC to influence various components of the data collection and interview process.

²⁸ Violent incidents include murder, hostage-taking, hostage-taking with sexual assault, forcible confinement with sexual assault, major disturbance, inmate fight, and assault

2001; and the incidents took place in one or more of the ten federal institutions listed previously (Refer to Appendix C).

A total of 74 women were extracted based on these criteria. From this list, the current institutional placement of each woman was reviewed in order to determine the current place of incarceration. From the total, 29 women were presently incarcerated at one of the nine correctional institutions²⁹, two at Burnaby Correctional Centre, and one at Edmonton Remand Centre. The remaining 41 women had completed their sentence or were on parole supervision in the community. One woman was deceased.

Three institutional sites were visited by the researcher. From the 29 women offenders eligible to participate, seven women were invited to participate in the study based on their institutional placement. This is referred to as opportunistic sampling in that subjects were approached to participate depending upon availability and convenience. As a result, the sample is not representative of the federally sentenced women population. The purpose of the research was to invite women to participate who were repeat and violent incarcerated offenders and who do not engage in relatively minor disciplinary infractions.

A total of five women were interviewed. Two women refused to participate in the research³⁰. The first interview was conducted at the Regional Psychiatric Centre in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The second interview was conducted at the Regional Reception Centre in St. Anne-des-Plaines, Québec. The remaining three interviews were conducted at Joliette Institution for Women in Joliette, Québec.

²⁹ The tenth institution, Prison for Women, closed on July 6th, 2000.

³⁰ One woman was incarcerated at Regional Psychiatric Centre and one woman was incarcerated at Saskatchewan Penitentiary. These women did not provide a reason for their refusal, and the researcher did not probe the women as to respect their decision.

The sample included three Caucasian and two Aboriginal women. The age of the participants ranged from 22 to 44 years old. Three women were single, one was in a common-law relationship, and one was married. The women were convicted and sentenced from 3 to 59 offences. Four of the women were serving sentences ranging from 2 to 8 years. One woman was serving a life sentence. All of the instigators committed a range of incidents including hostage-takings, inmate assaults, staff assaults, and inmate fights. The number of incidents for each woman ranged from 3 to 11.

Prior to arrival at each site, institutional staff were contacted through email correspondence. This included one psychologist, one nurse, and one unit manager³¹. In this correspondence, the research study was introduced and the potential participants were identified. A research information sheet (Refer to Appendix E) and a research proposal was sent to each institutional contact for further review. With the exception of one institution³², the staff approached the selected interview candidates prior to the proposed interview date to inform them about the research objectives, the interview process, and their voluntary consent. Upon arrival to each institution, the researcher reiterated these issues to the women in order to ensure their participation and answer their questions. The women who chose to participate were interviewed at a time of their convenience.

³¹ I feel that these particular contacts did not represent a threat to the women and thus did not pressure the women into participating. The women appeared to have a good rapport with these individuals.

³² This site was reluctant to inform the participant due to the heightened tension by institutional staff surrounding the content of the interview.

Ethical Issues

There are several ethical concerns when conducting research with human subjects and further when collecting qualitative data from an offender population. The issues of informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity will be briefly examined here. The free and informed consent of the participants was obtained on two separate occasions. On the first occasion, institutional staff consulted with the participants about the research and asked for their consent to participate in the study. Second, prior to conducting the interview, the research parameters and issues of informed consent were reiterated to the participants. At this time, the participants signed a consent form (Refer to Appendix F) assuring both confidentiality and anonymity. These ethical obligations were also outlined in the research information sheet which was distributed to the women at the time of the interview (Refer to Appendix E)³³. Each woman was given an unlimited amount of time to review this document along with the consent form.

Sensitive Research

Sensitive research can be described as any research that has the potential to generate physical, psychological, or emotional harm to the participants of the study³⁴. Due to the nature of the prison setting, there is the possibility that offenders may feel pressured or coerced by prison officials to participate as a result of their position of authority. To prevent such feelings of coercion, the participant was informed that

³³ The participants' names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

³⁴ These harms are clearly outlined in the research information sheet and informed consent form.

they were free to decline from the interview process without institutional repercussions, and that their participation would not be used against them in the event of pending investigations or court charges. Of equal importance, is the delicate nature and content of the interview. The interview questions asked the participants to discuss personal issues that may have solicited responses based on their criminal history, the harm instilled on victims, and/or their mental health problems. To ensure that the women did not depart from the interview upset or angry, at the conclusion of each interview, the respondents were asked about their thoughts regarding the interview including their general feelings as a result of their participation. Although after care by psychologists or primary workers was available, none was required by any of the participants.

Interview Structure

Interviews followed a semi-structured format which allowed for an interactive and spontaneous atmosphere instructive for further inquiry and exploration. This technique also enabled the researcher to elicit some of the similarities and differences among the responses of the interview participants. The interview schedule was divided into four sections: institutional experience with staff and inmates, inmate perceptions of violence in the prison context, individual experiences with violent incidents, and influences of the environment on behaviour (Refer to Appendix G). While questions in each section acted as a guide for participants' responses, the women were free and encouraged to elaborate on other areas that they considered relevant. One woman refused to answer questions about her individual experiences

with violent incidents, but was willing to discuss the remaining sections of the interview.

To aid in this process, all of the participants were asked if the interview could be audio-recorded. It was explained to the respondents that the preference to have the interview taped was to ensure that the woman's perspective was fully captured. The participants were strongly reminded that this was only an option and they were free to decline from the interview being recorded. Two women declined to have the interviews taped. As a result, these interviews were recorded through extensive and careful note-taking.

The interview data were collected from July to August 2002. The average interview took approximately 1 hour to complete. Interview times ranged from 35 minutes to 1 hour and 50 minutes. The interviews were either conducted in private visitor or program rooms during daytime hours.

Data Analysis

The structure of the interview provided the respondents with the opportunity to identify both individual and environmental factors that influence their violent behaviour in prison. Most of the literature to date has focused on characteristics that are specific to the individual such as race, age, marital status, criminal history, offence type, sentence length, and security classification. The analysis of the interviews generated specific themes dependent on these two broad categories of behavioural influences.

The grounded theory approach guided the analysis of the interviews. This method originated in the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) who proposed that theory

is “generated by (or grounded in) an iterative process involving the continual sampling and analysis of qualitative data gathered from concrete settings” (Pidgeon, 1996: 76). This approach looks for patterns that most accurately represent or summarize the observations. In turn, these patterns help to construct theory or suggest theoretical explanations (Maxfield & Babbie, 1998: 32).

As consistent with a grounded theory approach, an open indexing system was created. This involved the systematic process of working and sorting through the data to generate codes which referred to more abstract categories and themes. In the initial analysis, the data were tentatively labelled into concepts or categories that depicted the most important and representative ideas. These codes were refined and extended through the continuous analysis and constant comparison of the data. Both the similarities and differences in the texts were collected to provide a range of indicators that would eventually describe multiple qualitative facets of one significant concept (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996: 93).

This process was aided with the development of mapping, theme counting, writing definitions, and memo writing (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996). As part of the data analysis, the themes were condensed and drawn into a map, which intended to represent the thematic framework, to interconnect the themes to each other, and to link the themes to the research questions. This visual representation facilitated the process of understanding the relationships between the themes. The primary themes generated by the research were counted to maintain a frequency in which respondents referred to a specific theme. This enabled the researcher to determine the intensity of each theme based on the overall interview responses. The exercise of writing

definitions to describe particular themes or codes allows the researcher to explicitly state the qualities of the theme and to summarize the reasons for labelling or re-labelling particular responses (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996: 97). Memo writing typically includes the researcher's thoughts or comments on possible explanations for themes, any theoretical reflections, and links to the literature (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996: 95). These processes allow for the concepts and themes to be refined, integrated, and related to each other.

The results of the quantitative and qualitative data are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The results presented in this chapter provide a descriptive and exploratory analysis of violent incidents in the federal correctional system for women offenders. The analyses include the extent of violent incidents in federal prisons, a profile of women offenders committing violent incidents while incarcerated, and relying on women's experiences and perspectives, the chapter addresses the contributing influences of female prison violence.

A Description of Violent Incidents

An exploration of the nature of institutional incidents in women's prisons requires an investigation of the degree and frequency of violence, the extent of instigator involvement, incident trends by year and facility, and other incident related variables. These data intend to provide a framework to explore the characteristics of women perpetrators and to be further expanded upon by the individual and environmental influences for such behaviour.

Nature and Extent of Violent Incidents

According to the Offender Management System of the Correctional Service of Canada, from January 1st 1995 to December 31st 2001, there were 464 violent

incidents³⁵ (Refer to Appendix D) involving women offenders in nine³⁶ federal institutions across Canada (Refer to Appendix C).

In each incident, the reporting officer records the incident as involving one or more instigator(s), victim(s), associate(s), and/or unknown(s). Therefore, as an example, there may be multiple instigators and victims recorded for a single incident. For a smaller number of these incidents, at least one victim is recorded (n=157), and in some cases where a victim is reported, no instigator is reported (n=15). This under-reporting of the victim category may be explained by the nature of the incident (i.e., it was reported hours or days later or it occurred without witnesses), the victim was unknown to officials at the time of the incident, or the victim did not self-identify. Also, staff members who are victims of inmate instigated violence are not recorded into OMS (i.e., staff assaults, hostage takings)³⁷. It therefore may be a more common practice in some institutions to record instigators rather than victims.

Of the 464 violent incidents, 449 incidents reported the involvement of one or more instigators. This instigator category is divided into women who 'commit', 'attempt to commit', 'threaten to commit', 'conspire to commit', 'suspected', and 'associated' in incidents. These incidents included 176 staff assaults, 132 inmate assaults, 127 inmate fights, 7 hostage takings, 3 major disturbances, 3 visitor assaults, and 1 inmate murder.

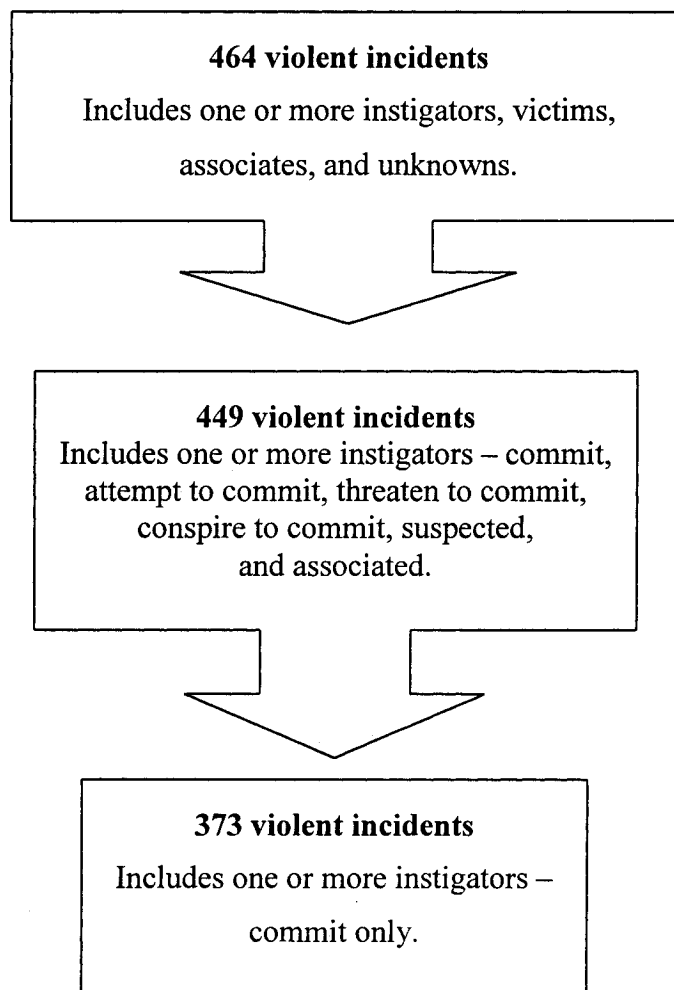
³⁵ This number represents unique incidents. That is, no incident is duplicated.

³⁶ In this six year time frame, no violent incidents were recorded for the Regional Reception Centre in Quebec. Some reasons for this include that the RRC may have more informal means for resolving violence, practice better dynamic security than other facilities, a smaller and more contained women offender population, or lower needs and risks presented by this population.

³⁷ OMS was created to record information on offenders only. Specifically, incident data are used as measures of disciplinary infractions and institutional adjustment. Therefore, offender involvement as perpetrators and/or victims is the only information recorded.

Of those incidents with reported instigators, 373 incidents reported one or more instigators who have ‘committed’ violent incidents. This includes 152 staff assaults (41%), 121 inmate fights (32%), 89 inmate assaults (24%), 4 hostage takings (1%), 3 major disturbances (1%), 3 visitor assaults (1%), and 1 inmate murder (0.3%). Figure 1 presents the composition of incident roles within each sub-analysis.

Figure 1: Violent Incident Funnel



Only incidents that have reported instigators who have 'committed' an incident were included as part of the final analysis. This was done to avoid misrepresenting the frequency of women's violence due to the more discretionary categories entitled under the instigator designation (i.e., suspected). There are no formal definitions provided by CSC policy regarding these instigator sub-categories; therefore there may be wide variation in interpretation by different institutions and individuals. In the simplest sense, the 'commit' category implies a relatively straightforward interpretation and it is anticipated that varying definitions of individual behaviour could not be applied. The decision to only include the 'commit' category rested on the assumption that the investigating officer would have a clear definition of this category based on common-sense, operational experience, substantial evidence (i.e., witnesses), and reasonable belief.

For each incident, the investigating officer briefly summarizes the nature of the violence. The following incident synopses have been extracted from the Offender Management System to provide some context to the characteristics of the incidents included in this study.

Inmate X assaulted inmate Y by entering into inmate Y's cell and punching inmate Y in the back of the head. Inmate Y suffered a bump to the back of the head and a bloody nose. Inmate X did not suffer any injuries [Inmate assault – staff].

While being escorted to Magistrate's Court, inmate X became hostile and aggressive towards the two escorting officers. She attempted to kick one officer and spit in the face of the other officer striking the officer in the right eye. She spit and hit another officer when placed back in her cell [Staff assault - staff].

Although these examples are descriptive in nature, some of the incident summaries are dense in terms of detail and lack pertinent information, which may be relevant for reviewing incident files for investigative or preventive purposes at a later date (i.e., type of behaviours, extent of injury, use of weapons, etc.).

In contrast, the following excerpts are two women respondents' descriptions of their most recent involvement as an instigator in a violent incident:

I bit another inmate. I broke the microwave. Tried to set the stove on fire. Cut myself. Trashed the kitchen. They [staff] had to intervene. I gave up the piece of glass I had and they got me to the IPC [Intensive Psychiatric Care] [Inmate assault - Annie].

I was sitting on the picnic table and the girl scratched my face. I turned around and she scratched me, so I jumped up on the picnic table. I didn't want to kick her in the face because I already had the upper hand because I was standing on the table, so I jumped down and I kicked her in the side and I started punching her in the face. My mouth was opened and she had her fingers in my mouth so I started punching her and punching her and she tried to walk away. So I grabbed her again and I started hitting her. The staff came out and pepper sprayed me [Inmate fight - Emily].

These quotes provide an interesting point of comparison not only because they reflect a lived experience and reality for these women, but also they give greater context and insight to their experiences. As described, these incidents may be able to provide more explicit detail and personal emotion. Although these examples of staff and inmate descriptions are not for the same incident³⁸, they carefully point to the importance of reporting and recording incidents in a thorough manner and the potential for biases and subjectivity that may emerge by either party when reporting

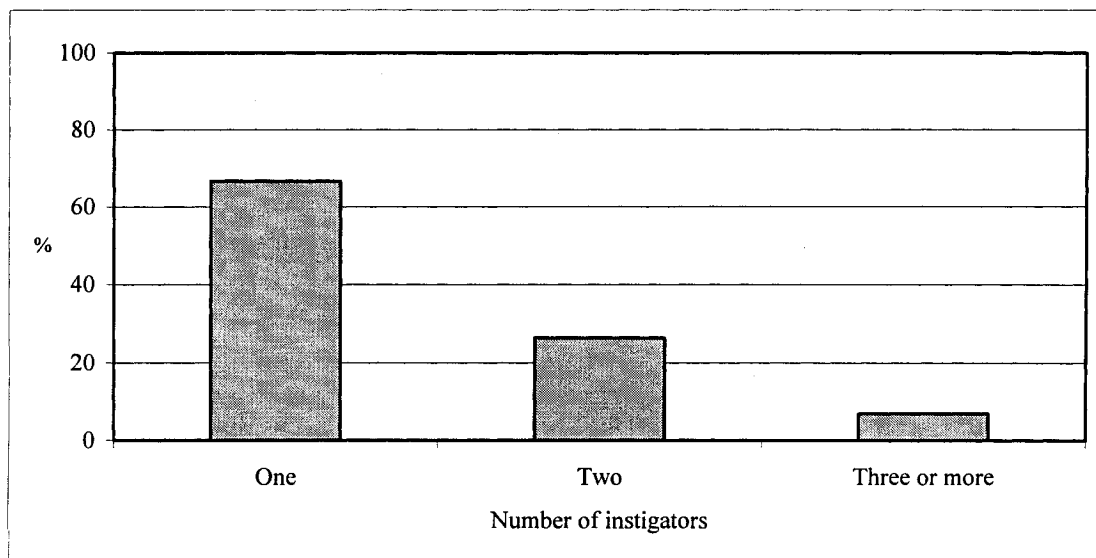
³⁸ Because the women's examples represent their personal descriptions of violent incidents, there were no incident numbers to use in order to match and extract the same incident from the incident database.

an incident.

Instigator Involvement in Violence

In terms of the number of women involved as instigators in each incident, most incidents recorded one committing instigator (67%) (Refer to Figure 2). A further 26% of incidents involved two instigators while 7% involved three or more instigators. In terms of specific types of incidents, one staff assault involved 26 instigators³⁹. The majority of staff assaults, however, had one instigator only (93%). Similarly, the largest proportion of inmate assaults (80%) also had one instigator. Two instigators committed the one inmate murder.

Figure 2: Number of Violent Instigators



As will be further discussed in the qualitative analysis, individual violence may be more common than collective violence in that the women respondents placed

³⁹ This incident is described as a “sit-in” protest. No other details were available.

greater emphasis on strength, independence, and respect. Both individual and group acts of violence are further compounded by the roles of associates and incompatibles in the prison environment.

Incident Trends by Year and Facility

Table 1 presents the number and percentage of violent incidents from 1995 to 2001. The proportion of staff assaults has been consistently one of the highest categories of violence reported in women's institutions. From 1995 to 1998, the largest proportion of violent incidents was staff assaults (44%, 48%, 46%, 42%, respectively). A slight change occurred in 1999 where inmate assaults represented the highest proportion of violent incidents (36%). This changed again in the year 2000, when the majority of incidents were inmate fights (46%). However, in 2001, the pattern of violence against staff re-emerged with the majority of incidents recorded as staff assaults (46%).

This trend will become readily apparent in the interview responses as the women discuss their feelings and experiences toward staff members. More specifically, they refer to the feelings of animosity, resentment, and hostility as a result of negative staff behaviours and attitudes, reactive prison administration, and poor intervention efforts. Alternatively, staff may also be less tolerant of aggressive or violent behaviour toward their colleagues rather than any such behaviour toward other inmates and thus may partially explain the higher proportion of reported staff assaults.

Table 1: Violent Incidents by Year

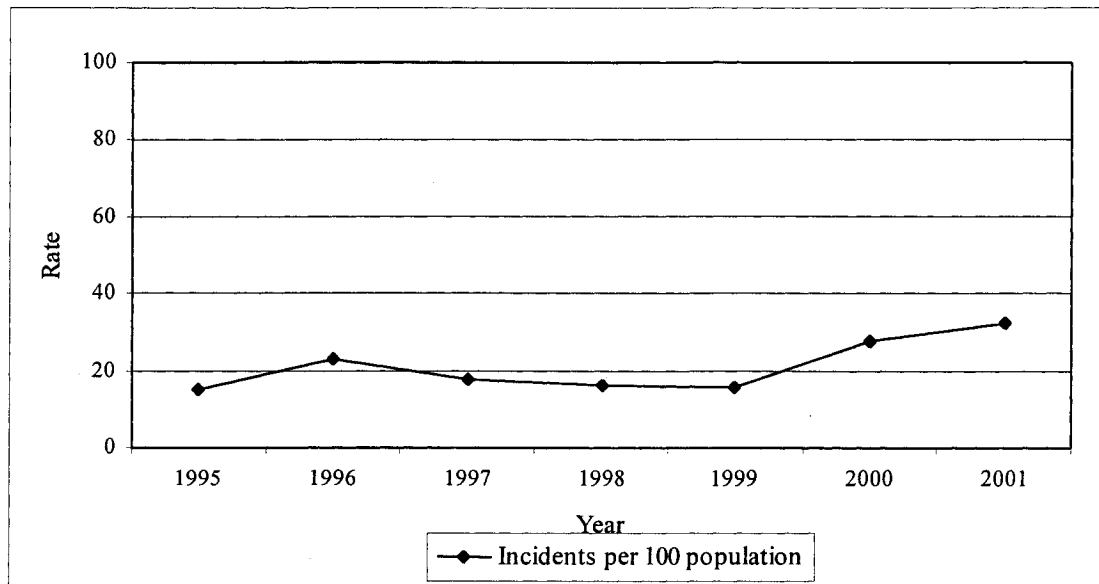
Incident Type	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Hostage-taking	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)
Major disturbance	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
Inmate fight	11 (44%)	13 (33%)	13 (30%)	10 (23%)	13 (29%)	36 (46%)	25 (26%)
Inmate assault	3 (12%)	7 (18%)	8 (18%)	15 (35%)	16 (36%)	13 (17%)	27 (28%)
Staff assault	11 (44%)	19 (48%)	20 (46%)	18 (42%)	14 (31%)	25 (32%)	45 (46%)
Visitor assault	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
Inmate murder	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	25 (100%)	40 (100%)	44 (100%)	43 (100%)	45 (100%)	78 (100%)	98 (100%)

According to population profiles and forecasts, the number of federally sentenced women in custody has been increasing since 1995 and is projected to continue increasing into 2004 (Boe, 2001). As such, it is important to explore how these population increases may have affected the institutional milieu for women offenders. Figure 3 demonstrates the calculated incident rate in number of incidents per 100 population from 1995 to 2001⁴⁰. The average population per year is based on the in custody population for the 1st day of all available monthly counts. Monthly

⁴⁰ All nine institutions are included in the incident rate.

counts were available for 61 months of the total 84 months.

Figure 3: Violent Incident Rate



This figure illustrates the trend of violence across a seven year time period. As shown, the rate of violent incidents increased between 1995 and 1996, decreased from 1997 to 1999, increased dramatically in 2000, and peaked in 2001. Overall, the rate for each year is fairly low with the lowest rate reported at 15.1 per 100 population in 1995 and the highest rate at 32.3 per 100 population in 2001. However, this trend appears to suggest that reported violence instigated by women offenders is a growing phenomenon inside federal penitentiaries.

With these trends outlined, it is important to take into consideration some pivotal events that may have affected the increases and decreases in the violent incident rates. For instance, the regional facilities for federally sentenced women began to open in 1995 with the last regional facility opening in 1997. The Prison for

Women was closed for operation in July 2000. Co-located units were also opened in the Regional Psychiatric Centre (February 1996), Springhill Institution (September 1996), and Saskatchewan Penitentiary (August 1996) in this time frame. More recently, structured living environments⁴¹ and secure units⁴² were constructed for a small proportion of maximum-security women offenders in custody⁴³. Institutional placement in any of these facilities holds the potential to influence inmate behaviour either positively or negatively. However, some women may experience maladjustment in the form of stress, aggression, or violence in new environments. Changes in environmental milieu may also impact on staff attitudes and practices, or institutional operations and policies. As a result, the procedures for reporting and recording incidents may vary across sites, or become more or less stringent, thus affecting the rate of violent incidents across the years.

The number of violent incidents in each federal institution is also available from the data⁴⁴. Figure 4 demonstrates the percentage of violent incidents occurring in the nine federal institutions. From 1995 to 2001, the facility with the most violent incidents was Springhill (Nova Scotia) (24%; 88) and the facility with the least amount was Okimaw Ochi Healing Lodge (Saskatchewan) (2%; 8). With the exception of Joliette Institution (Quebec) (4%; 14), the remaining federal facilities incarcerating women had relatively similar proportions of violent incidents occurring

⁴¹ August 2001 to December 2001.

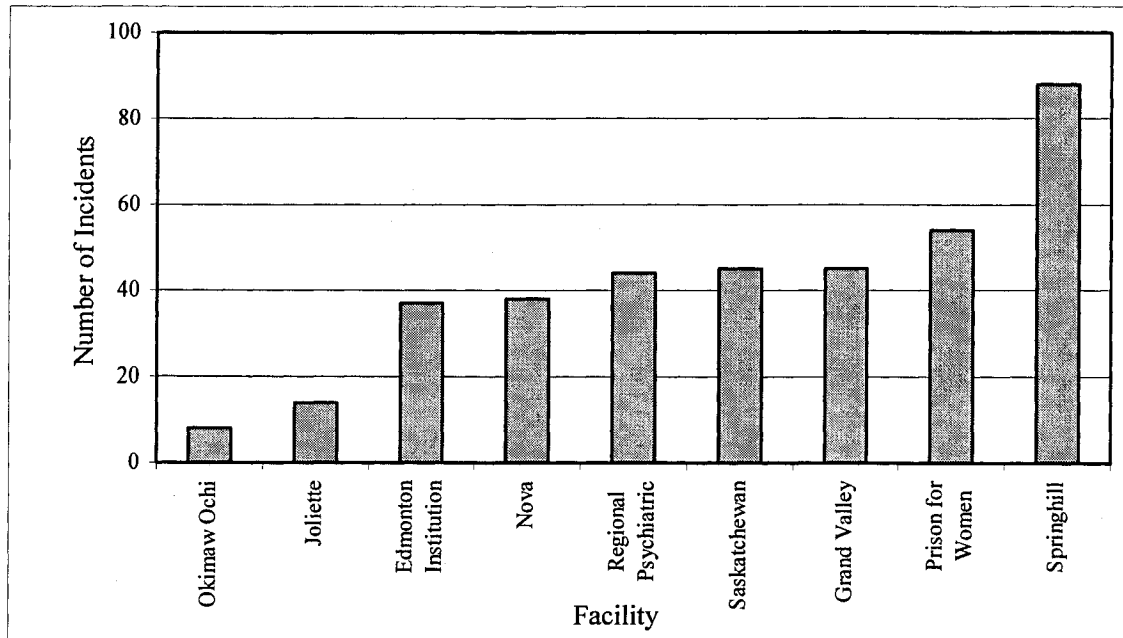
⁴² January 2003 to April 2003.

⁴³ See Introduction.

⁴⁴ Due to the small number of incidents, the number of incidents in each facility is not broken down by year.

throughout this time frame (ranging from 10% to 14%; or 37 to 54 incidents).

Figure 4: Violent Incidents by Facility



More specifically, the majority of staff assaults were reported at Springhill Institution (41%) (Nova Scotia) while the majority of inmate assaults were reported at Grand Valley Institution (Ontario) (20%). Edmonton Institution for Women (Alberta) experienced the largest proportion of inmate fights (17%). The one inmate murder occurred in Edmonton Institution for Women in 1996. Three hostage-takings took place in Saskatchewan Penitentiary (Saskatchewan) and one in the Regional Psychiatric Centre (Saskatchewan). However, an upcoming report by CSC states that women offenders have committed a total of 12 hostage takings between 1999 and 2002 (Taylor & Flight, forthcoming).

While these data provide great insight into the nature and extent of women's violence in prison, it is important to contextualize the data by exploring women's

voices and experiences. The following descriptions represent women's thoughts on the nature and extent of violence within specific individual facilities.

Prison for Women:

I was there when they got [in] the big riot and the girl got in the fight with the guard...it was on tv. Used to have a lot more [fights] between the girls. I saw a couple of stabbings and things like that [Sara].

It was more when I was in Prison for Women. That was just the beat of the place – that was not the same place. Over there, it was more like a men's pen [Sara].

More inmate fights. The tension was higher. That sets off tempers. I don't know why the tension was high [Beth].

Saskatchewan Penitentiary:

Always violent in there [Susan].

Out west...that's where the violent people are coming from. That's where most of the violent offences take place [Susan].

There's a lot of violence there – when I was there...Fires, guards always getting attacked, girls fighting amongst each other, throwing coffee, hot water, boiling water in each other's faces, screaming at each other [Emily].

Regional Facilities:

I didn't see no violence here. Well, it's not much people here who are impulsive. You probably got more verbal violence here. But physical violence, it don't happen [Sara].

A few physical altercations [Susan].

Not bad. Not really. In any institution, there's spurts when there's problems and there's no problems [Annie].

Regional Psychiatric Centre:

There is more self harm, I think, than there is harm to others [Annie].

I [have] seen a lot of women slashing. Slitting their throats and everything [Emily].

Nothing really happens here. Here it is a bit more verbal abuse than physical [Susan].

Provincial Institutions:

More little fights. But more serious when it would happen in P4W [Sara].

There's the most violence. Because that's the provincial jail. There's no treatment, there's not enough staff...the guard's don't care. They're not even on the range. They're in the hallway. So they never see what is going on [Annie].

It is difficult to assess the differences in the levels of violence among all of the federal institutions with these few responses. However, it can be suggested that there may be apparent distinctions made between the violence instigated in a regional facility, maximum-security institution (i.e., Saskatchewan Penitentiary), and psychiatric unit (i.e., Regional Psychiatric Centre). This is an area that will be further explored with the environmental factors discussed in the qualitative component of the study where clear distinctions are made between the level of intervention provided in treatment and custody oriented institutions.

Other Incident Characteristics

Other related incident variables include the primary and secondary method used in the incident, use of a weapon, property damage, and primary and secondary indicators of the incident. Several of these factors were missing or not applicable for the incidents discussed in this study. This was most noticeable in the large proportion of "other" responses for these variables. Furthermore, very few incidents had a secondary method or indicator reported altogether. As such, these incident characteristics will be only briefly outlined.

The primary method used in violent incidents by instigators was punching and kicking (54%). "Other" methods were deployed in 35% of incidents but which were not specified. In 49 incidents, instigators were recorded as using a weapon during the violent incident. The majority of these incidents reported the use of "other" type of weapon (76%) but of which was not indicated in the incident data. Property damage for violent incidents was not applicable for 349 incidents. The remaining incidents revealed that 2 incidents reported major property damage while 17 incidents had minor damage.

For each incident, a primary and secondary factor or indicator of the violent incident is recorded. This variable can be described as the factor associated with the occurrence of the incident. CSC does not provide a definition but some of the categories included are: brew/alcohol, drugs, sex, cell thief, informer, debts/loansharking, and muscling/extortion. The majority of incidents (48%) indicated an "other" factor that was not listed. No indicators were identified for 24% of the incidents. The primary factor of retaliation was reported for 17% of incidents.

Very little conclusions can be suggested from the above-mentioned variables. It is apparent that consistent and detailed information is not recorded for the specific characteristics of incidents. This type of information was elaborated upon by the interview respondents, yet more extensive record keeping would certainly prove useful for future investigation and ultimately for the prevention of institutional incidents.

A Profile of Violent Instigators

From 373 violent incidents instigated from January 1st 1995 to December 31st 2001, there were 256 federally sentenced women who committed one or more violent incidents⁴⁵. The following analysis provides a descriptive profile of this population including socio-demographics, emotional and mental health needs, offence characteristics, criminal history, risk and security classification.

The characteristics of women involved in violent incidents are briefly compared with a snapshot of women offenders in custody on January 1st, 2003 (n=345)⁴⁶. This level of comparison allows for the identification of some similarities and differences between the profile of women offenders who are violent and women offenders in general⁴⁷. It is important to note that some women offenders may be duplicated in both profiles as in the case where a woman committed at least one violent incident between 1995 and 2001 and who was incarcerated on the snapshot date, January 1st 2003⁴⁸.

Demographics

The majority of women offenders who have committed violent incidents are Caucasian (55%). Aboriginal women (30%) comprised the second largest group of women who have instigated violence while incarcerated. Slightly over half of the women were single (51%) at time of admission to a federal institution followed by women who were in common law relationships (25%) and married (10%). The largest proportion of women (45%) was between the ages of 26 to 35. The average

⁴⁵ A woman may have committed more than one incident but is counted only once in the data.

⁴⁶ Offender Management System, Correctional Service of Canada, January 1, 2003.

age of the women profiled was 31 years. More than three-quarters (78%) had no high school diploma. A further 84% were unemployed at the time of their arrest.

Comparatively, women offenders captured in the snapshot were comprised of 61% Caucasians and 27% Aboriginals. Compared to the general women offender population in custody, Aboriginal women offenders in this study were only slightly over-represented while Caucasian women were under-represented. Similar proportions of violent women perpetrators and women in general were married, common-law, and single. However, a lower proportion of women in the snapshot were between the ages of 26 to 35 years old (36%). Alternatively, the average age of women offenders from the snapshot was 34 years. Women offenders in general appear to be slightly older than women involved in violent incidents. Similar proportions of women profiled were unemployed at arrest; however, a lower proportion of women in the snapshot had no high school diploma (70%).

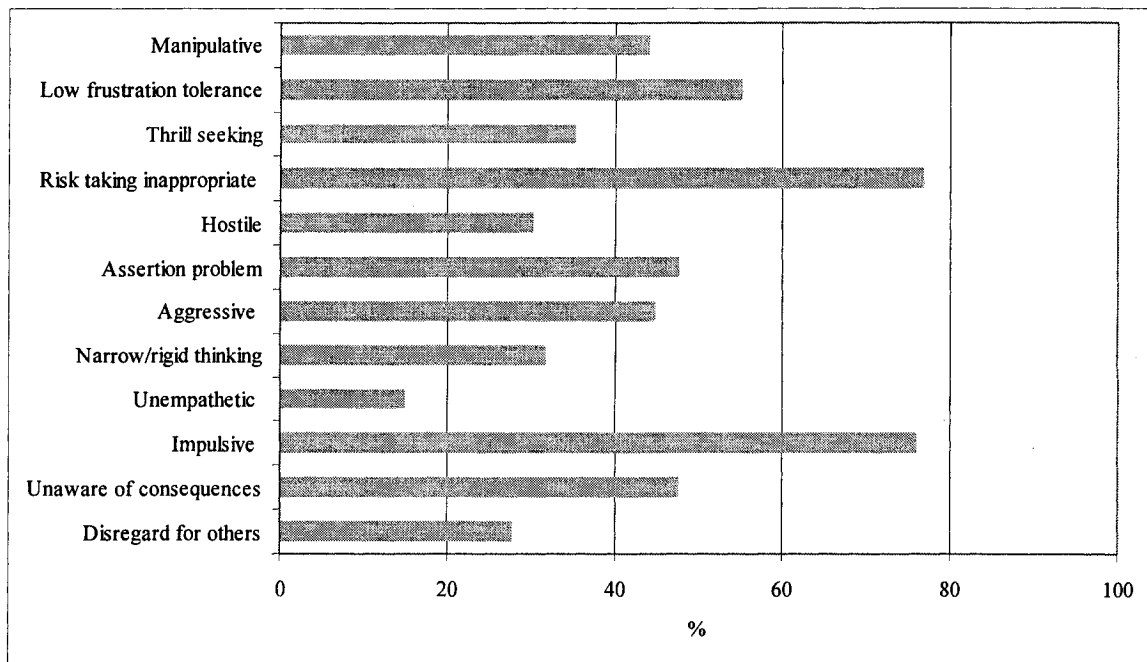
Personal and Emotional Health Needs

At admission to federal custody, the personal and emotional needs of federal offenders are assessed by the intake officer. These indicators assess the level of need and dictate the intensity of program intervention during their period of incarceration. Several indicators of this nature were extracted from the profile database to further examine the extent of violent and aggressive behaviour (Refer to Figure 5) and the ability to resolve problems of this nature among women who use violence (Refer to Figure 6).

⁴⁷ Incident data were not available for the subjects in the snapshot.

⁴⁸ Tests of significance were not used for comparisons between the two groups.

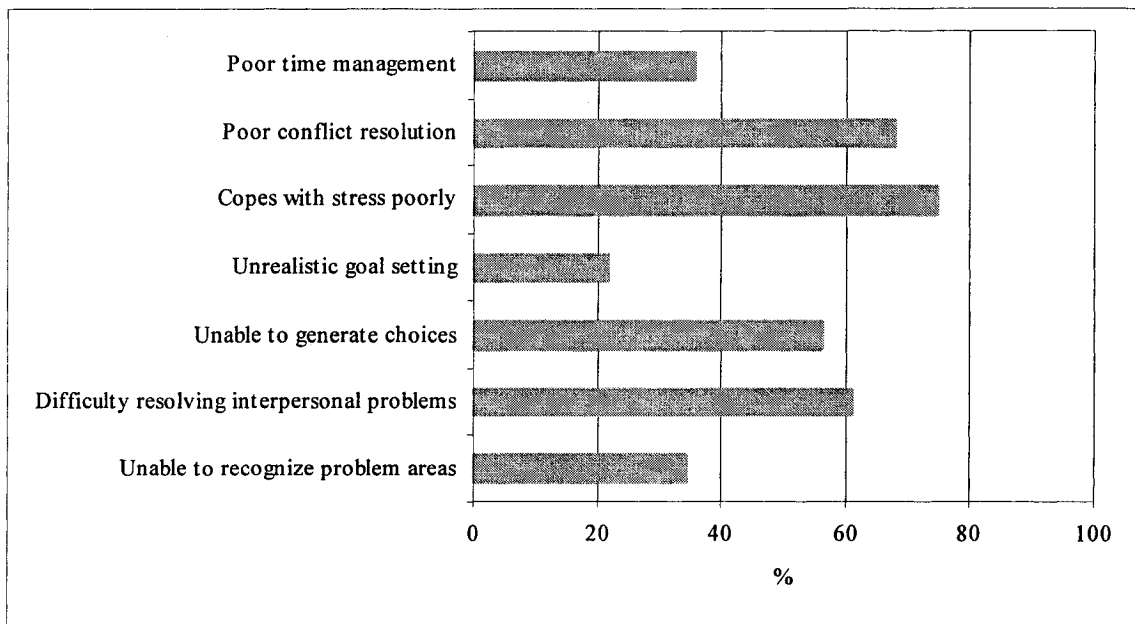
Figure 5: Personal/Emotional Needs– Violence Prone Behaviour



In terms of violence prone behaviour, women who have been identified as violent in this study primarily engage in inappropriate risk taking (77%), impulsive behaviour (76%), and have low frustration tolerance (55%). They are further identified as often being unaware of the consequences of their behaviour (48%) and as having assertion (48%) and aggression (45%) problems.

Interestingly, women who have committed violent incidents while incarcerated are different to the women offenders in the snapshot with regard to some personal/emotional needs. Higher proportions of women who have committed violent incidents have high needs associated with thrill seeking, risk taking, hostility, aggressiveness, impulsiveness, and frustration tolerance compared to women offenders captured in the snapshot.

Figure 6: Personal/Emotional Needs – Problem Solving Skills



With over one-half of violent instigators identified as being unable to generate choices (56%) and one-third as unable to recognize problem areas (35%), the majority of this group also encounter difficulties coping with stress (75%), resolving conflict (68%), and resolving interpersonal problems (61%).

Similarly, women offenders in the snapshot have higher proportions of emotional needs with regard to problem solving skills compared to violent women offenders. The few exceptions in this case include poor stress management and poor time management. However, caution must be exercised in the interpretation of these results as it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the needs of the women offender population has changed over the years and the degree to which the offender intake assessment process has changed in identifying high need areas.

Mental Health Needs

The extent of mental health problems are intended to be captured for offenders at intake to a federal institution. Nineteen percent of the women were currently diagnosed with a mental disorder. A further 37% had been presently prescribed medication. Signs of depression were reported for 10% of the women. At admission to federal custody, 24% of the women had previous suicide attempts, while 7% may be suicidal according to the intake officer.

Although the above proportions suggest a low prevalence of mental health needs for the population under study, it is important to consider that slightly smaller proportions of women in the snapshot were currently diagnosed with a mental disorder (15%) and who were currently prescribed medication (34%)⁴⁹. Thus, women who have committed violent incidents are slightly over-represented in terms of mental health needs, and specifically with regard to medication use and positive diagnosis.

The presence of mental health needs as a source of tension and anger was clearly indicated in interviews with women perpetrators. As will be discussed, violence occurred between women in the general population and special needs population. In addition to inadequate accommodation arrangements, many of the women in these two groups are incompatible with regard to personality and behaviour differences, and this is further complicated by a lack of treatment for women with mental health problems.

⁴⁹ Suicide-related information was not available for the subjects in the snapshot.

Offence Characteristics

One half of women offenders in this study were admitted to federal custody on a warrant of committal (i.e., new offence) (50%). However, another large proportion of women were admitted with a revocation without new offence (37%) while smaller proportions were admitted with a revocation with offence (7%) and revocation with outstanding charge (4%). These latter proportions indicate that women did not fully complete their sentence before returning to federal custody.

The types of federal offences for each woman's current sentence were extracted. Some women may have previous sentences to federal custody. At warrant of committal, an offender is considered to be serving the first term in their sentence. If an offender was released, failed to complete their sentence, and returned to custody, they receive a new term in the same sentence. Over half of the women offenders were serving the first term of their federal sentence (51%). This means that the other one half of women have failed on conditional release and returned to federal custody.

Overall, the majority of women who have committed violent incidents are currently incarcerated for other *Criminal Code* offences (70%), other property offences (51%), assault (46%), drug related offences (33%), and robbery (30%). In this case, women could be incarcerated for more than one offence. Data were also available for the most serious offence for which women were convicted. The largest proportion of women had a most serious offence for robbery (25%), assault (20%), homicide (20%), and drug-related offences (17%). Alternatively, in this case, each woman is counted once.

The mean aggregate sentence length was 4.1 years with a range from 1.5 years to 17.8 years⁵⁰. The median sentence length was 3.0 years. The majority of women offenders in this sample were serving sentences from 2 to 4 years (55%). A smaller proportion of women were serving sentences of less than 2 years (17%)⁵¹. Twenty women (8%) were serving a life or indeterminate sentence.

A much higher proportion of women offenders in the snapshot were admitted to federal custody on a warrant of committal (77%). This may imply that for women offenders released from custody, women instigators of violence are more often returned to custody on some basis of revocation rather than for a new offence. In addition, a higher proportion of women in the snapshot had a most serious offence of homicide (32%) and alternatively, a lower proportion had a most serious offence of assault (12%) compared to women offenders who have committed violent incidents. Fairly similar proportions in both groups were serving sentences from 2 to 4 years, however a much greater proportion of women in the snapshot were serving life or indeterminate sentences (19%), which adequately represents the larger proportion of convicted homicide offenders in this group.

Criminal History

In general, violent adult women have been involved in the criminal justice system as youths. Thirty nine percent have made previous appearances to youth court. In terms of custodial dispositions, 19% have been sentenced to open custody,

⁵⁰ Life and indeterminate sentences were excluded from the analysis for aggregate sentence length.

⁵¹ Some women under federal custody may be on Exchange of Services Agreements under provincial jurisdiction and therefore are incarcerated for a period of less than two years.

25% to secure custody, and 30% to community supervision. Six women have been transferred from secure youth custody to adult custody.

The adult criminal history of these women offenders is also quite extensive. The largest proportion of women (82%) have previously attended adult court. Despite their current term of federal incarceration, 18% had served previous federal sentences. However, the majority (72%) had been previously sentenced to provincial institutions. A further 74% had been sentenced to community supervision in the past.

In terms of behaviour while under correctional supervision, 37% had previous failures on conditional release while 22% had previous escapes from custody. In addition, 37% have been segregated for disciplinary infractions and 11% have been reclassified to higher levels of custody. These proportions appear fairly low given their involvement in violent incidents whereby there is the likely potential for an individual to be punished with segregation or transferred to higher security. Therefore, it must be taken into consideration that these variables are assessed at intake and thus do not take into account the whole period of incarceration, which thereby may underestimate the extent of failures.

In comparison to women involved in violent incidents, lower proportions of women offenders in the snapshot had past involvement in youth (29%) and adult court (69%), served previous federal (12%) and provincial sentences (58%). As previously outlined from the offence data, fewer women in general had previous failures on conditional release (28%). Not surprisingly, women offenders in general had received less segregation for disciplinary infractions (23%), while similar proportions had been reclassified to higher security (9%).

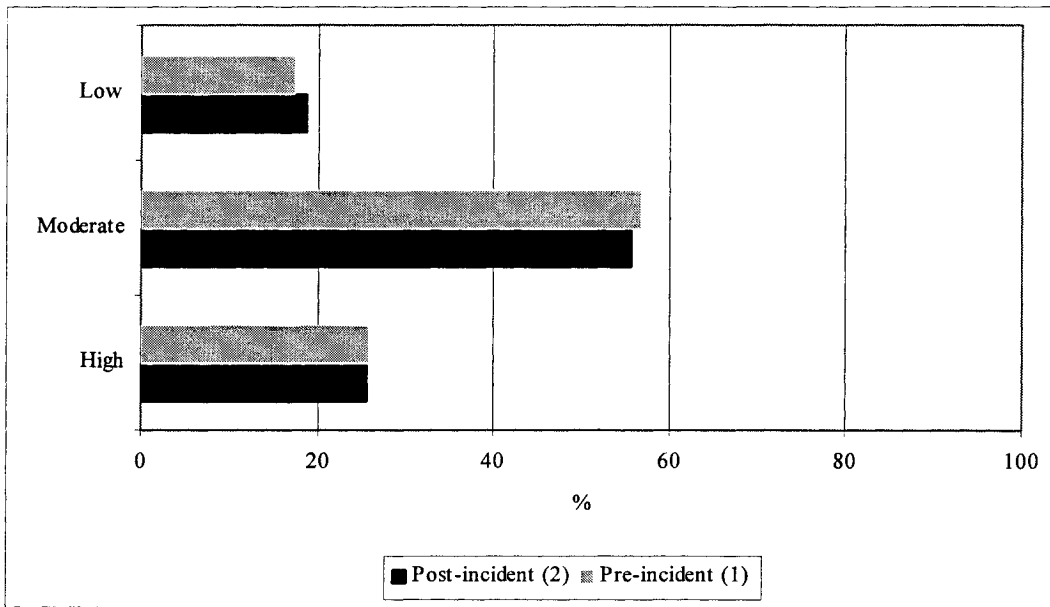
Risk and Security Classification

During various points in the offenders' sentence, their level of risk to re-offend is assessed. The risk to re-offend and security classification is initially assessed at intake to federal custody. The data showed that the majority of women are assessed at intake as moderate risk (49%) and as a medium security level (58%).

These variables are typically re-assessed every six months or following the occurrence of institutional incidents and transfers. Pre and post assessments for risk level and security classification was extracted for each woman's most recent incident. Pre-risk and pre-security levels are the last assessments prior to the offender's most recent violent incident, while post assessments are the first assessment after their most recent incident.

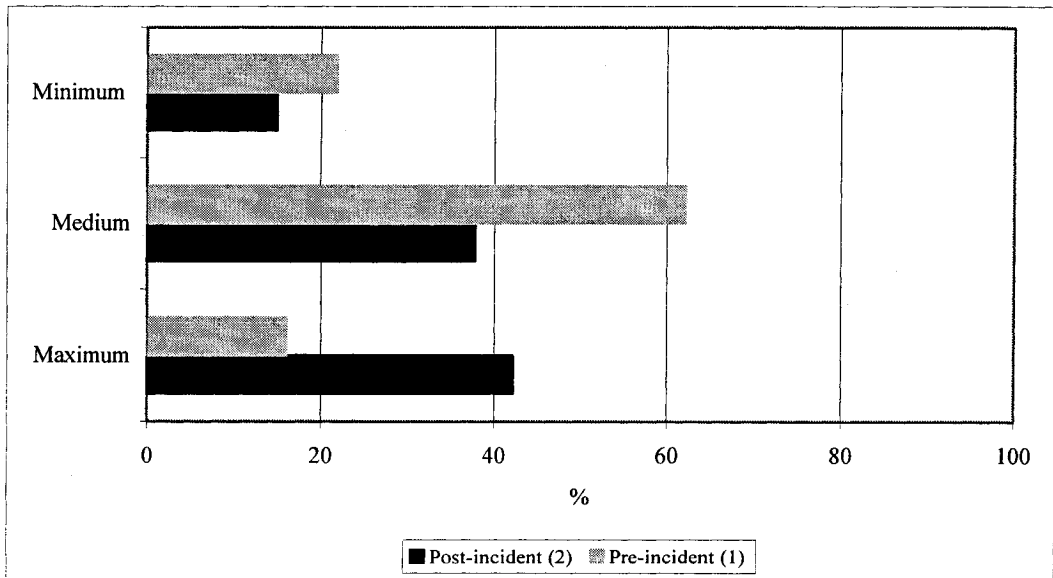
Figure 7 and 8 demonstrate the change of risk and security rating before and after the occurrence of the most recent violent incident. The assessment for risk did not appear to change before and after the occurrence of a violent incident. However, the findings suggest that maximum-security designations increased following violent incidents. Caution is warranted in interpreting these results as missing data has been generated in some cases and the pre and post assessments may not be taken at same intervals for every woman.

Figure 7: Risk to Re-offend



- (1) Most recent violent incident
(2) Most recent violent incident

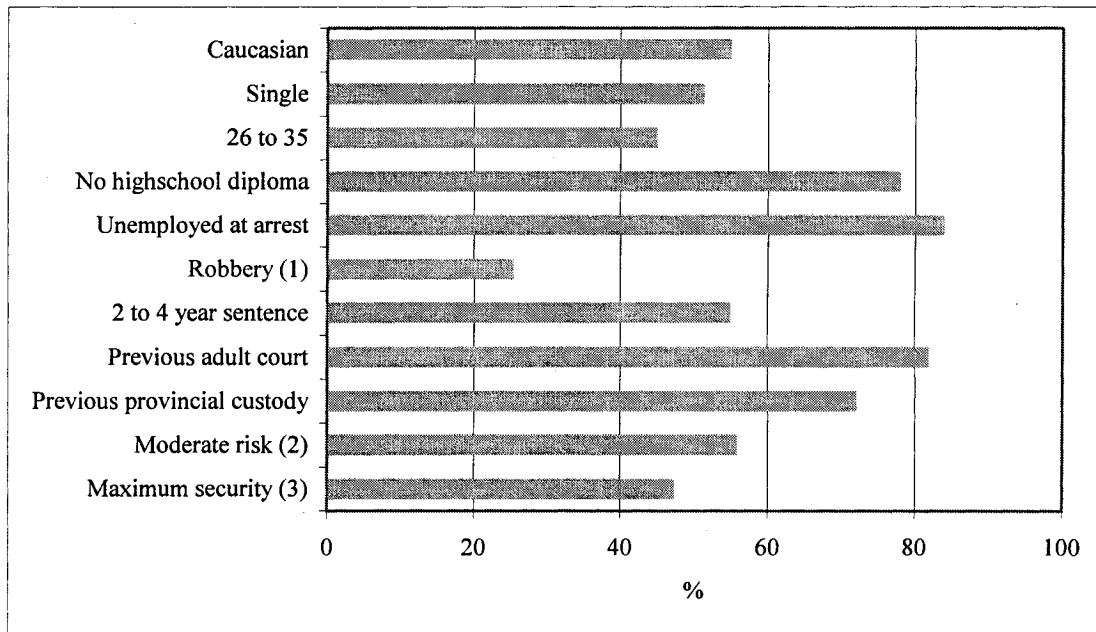
Figure 8: Security Classification



- (1) Most recent violent incident
(2) Most recent violent incident

Figure 9 summarizes the profile described for the population under study. Women offenders who have committed violent incidents are typically Caucasian, single and between 26 to 35 years of age. Similar to the general women offender population, they have low levels of education and employment. Further, they can be described as having moderate personal/emotional and mental health needs. The majority of the women are serving sentences from 2 to 4 years and the most serious offence for the largest proportion of women is robbery. In addition to their current convictions, many women have an extensive criminal history as adults.

Figure 9: Profile Summary



(1) Most serious offence

(2) Post incident

(3) Post incident

Some differences and similarities were noted between violent women offenders and the general women offender population. For example, there were differences with regard to race, age, education, mental health, criminal history, and

some offence characteristics. For instance, larger proportions of women committing violent incidents were younger, Aboriginal, uneducated, diagnosed mentally disordered, and currently medicated. Violent women instigators also had more extensive criminal histories and were more likely to be incarcerated for assault compared to women in the snapshot. Overall, violent instigators appeared to demonstrate lower personal/emotional needs than women offenders in general.

Contributing Influences to Female Prison Violence

The data collected from the in-depth interviews with five women offenders explored their perspectives on individual⁵² and environmental⁵³ characteristics contributing to violence in federal institutions. It was discovered that these two main characteristics are not mutually exclusive but instead, are closely intertwined in degree and context. Therefore, it is essential that each be discussed in an effort to explain the complex dynamics of prison violence. Five dominant themes were generated to represent this duality of influences. These include drug use, victimization, violence as self-representation, prison culture, and institutional goals.

Individual Characteristics

The presence of individual characteristics in relation to prison violence was less predominant in the women's responses compared to environmental characteristics. Nonetheless, these characteristics deserve brief interpretation and

⁵² Individual characteristics include those specific or static to the individual: age, race, offence, criminal history, substance abuse, personality, and so on.

⁵³ Environmental characteristics include a range of institutional, structural, or organizational variables: disciplinary procedures, punishment methods, staff treatment, living atmosphere, prison culture, and so on.

analysis. Three themes represent this facet of prison violence: drug use, victimization, and violence as self-representation.

Drug Use

As described by three women, drugs were sometimes a motivating factor for involvement in violence. For example, some women reported instigating a fight to obtain drugs, or alternatively engaging in fights as a result of using drugs:

And drugs too you know. I've seen women scrap over one pill. And then they wonder why there's drugs. Because there's nothing to do. What else are you going to do? Let's get high. What are we going to do tonight? Let's save our pills and get high...Because people are too much dope hounds. You know if there is one joint somewhere, people scrap over it [Emily].

As described by one woman, she would become more aggravated and impulsive while using drugs and thus more likely to engage in violence: "I think it is more when people are using in the place...they can turn...drugs or alcohol – you get more aggravate[d] – you're more impulsive when you're using" [Sara]. One woman who was an inmate at the Prison for Women indicated that drug debts often caused violence among offenders. She noted:

If they're provoked, just like a dog...the same instincts as a human being. Some react more than others. Some have triggers. A lot has to do with drugs and booze...drug debts at Prison for Women. Tension rises in a closed environment with 150 women. [Beth]

It is not known whether the use of drugs was a habit acquired prior to the prison experience; however, it appears that the substance abuse in this context originates from boredom and irritation which in these cases ultimately results in violence.

In comparison, the quantitative analysis reveals that the primary indicators of “drugs” and “debts” were reported for only a small proportion of the incidents (2% and 0.5%, respectively). It appears that the quantitative data did not identify these as prominent influences for violent behaviour; however, the women’s responses clearly indicate these factors as sources of violence among inmates.

Victimization

The personal life experiences of women offenders also appear to assume an influencing role on their violent behaviour. One dimension of this experience is abuse during childhood or adulthood. All respondents indicated that past abuse is a reason for the occurrence of prison violence, especially considering that the majority of women offenders reported being victims of abuse:

Usually those who have been locked up have been abused. Women aren’t violent for no reason [Beth].

If violence happens against staff and inmates, it’s usually because the staff have been provoking it for a long time. Because most of the women that have come into jail have been abused on the street. And so when they come in, and the staff, you know, attack you or try to get all sexual and shit, you think of all the other shit that has been done to you and they [staff] get the ass end of the stick [Emily].

Need assessments from the quantitative data reveal that at intake to federal custody, 57% of violent women perpetrators in this study self-reported being victims of spousal abuse. A further 38% reported that spousal abuse had occurred between their parents while growing up. It is important to acknowledge that these proportions most likely do not accurately represent the prevalence of this problem due to the potential of under-reporting by women offenders.

This type of socialization seems to represent a salient factor in how these life experiences impact upon institutional violence. For some women, a violent and abusive atmosphere was a common experience in their family home or street life:

When you're brought up in a violent setting, this is what your beliefs are. These are the kinds of values instilled as a kid [Emily].

Violent behaviour becomes normalized as a consequence of women following the beliefs and values instilled and reinforced in this environment:

[Violence] it's normal. I grew up with it. For me, I have learned at home that violence is okay because I grew up in an abusive home [Annie].

Similarly, another woman commented: "maybe that's all women know is violence" and "if that's all people know...violence...how are people suppose to change?" [Beth]. As evidenced in these quotes, women's past life experiences with violence and abuse may intensify their feelings of anger and negatively affect their response to any aversive stimuli during their period of incarceration. Many women may continue to be victims of violence in prison; however, in these examples, it appears that women have reverted to the role of the victimizer.

Violence as Self-Representation

Campbell and Muncer (1987; 1994) describe social representations of violence⁵⁴ as the thoughts and feelings related to aggression. Acts of aggression or violence are representative of the individual women's purpose or function for violence. Accordingly, individuals engage in violent and aggressive behaviour as an "expressive" or "instrumental" form. Typically, findings have indicated that women

⁵⁴ For a more detailed discussion of this concept see Chapter 2.

use expressive violence whereas men use instrumental violence (Belknap, 2001; Campbell & Muncer, 1994). However, both expressive and instrumental violence were present in the women's responses. First, violence can be understood as expressive as it serves to release tension and to express feelings. It is a way for women to vent their anger or sadness to their surrounding audience. As these women note:

Just a way to vent – get out all my feelings and stuff. And to sometimes it's to get your point across. Especially with staff [Emily].

It tells people how I am feeling. It was a tension release [Annie].

I start slashing myself and it was just like to get out that anger that was on me because I would go and go get them stitches and it felt so better after when I was seeing the blood [Sara].

Second, the purpose of violence can be viewed as instrumental in that their violent behaviour was a method to gain control of the situation.

When my thoughts race, I can't...I feel like I am out of control. So to get back into control, I'll either hurt myself or somebody else [Annie].

Like when I take my hostages, it gives me a rush. It's addictive. Like an adrenaline rush. You know, it feels good [Emily].

As mentioned, some women indicated the use of both expressive and instrumental modes of violence. The type of representation may be a conscious or subconscious act and may depend on the situational context in which the violent behaviour is precipitated. For example, women offenders who instigate hostage takings may use violence to represent a calculated purpose as a means to control their environment whereas women who self-injure may use violence against the self as a temporary release of pain, guilt, or stress.

According to the qualitative data, individual characteristics appeared to play a minor, but contributing role to violent behaviour in prison. These types of individual factors were most likely developed or experienced prior to incarceration and in some way contribute to the more dominant environmental influences that will be discussed later. The lifestyles in which these women are accustomed to, including their belief and value systems, are most likely reinforced in prison cultures that have the potential to support the use of drugs and violence. Drug abuse may also signify a coping mechanism to the individual traumas experienced prior to incarceration. Furthermore, the unique personalities that develop during childhood and adolescence will have an effect on individual responses to a combination of situational events or triggers in any environment. Women may be unable to show progress as a result of exposure to an environment that highly facilitates negative individual traits, such as anger and hostility. From these responses, it is not possible to determine the extent to which these individual characteristics interact with and influence the environmental characteristics. Such conclusions can only be made with more rigorous investigation.

Environmental Characteristics

Due to the importance of environmental characteristics in the offender interviews, a more thorough and elaborate analysis is conducted here. Two themes emerge that demonstrate the influence of environmental characteristics on violent behaviour in prison. These themes include: prison culture and institutional goals.

Prison Culture: Sources and Outcomes

Clemmer (1966) defines prison culture as the social organization of the penitentiary, both formal and informal, including the interactions of the inmates and staff. The culture consists of the:

...habits, behaviour systems, traditions, history, customs, folkways, codes, the laws and rules which guide the inmates, and their ideas, opinions and attitudes toward or against homes, family, education, work, recreation, government, prisons, police, judges, other inmates, wardens, ministers, doctors, guards...and so on (Clemmer, 1966: 294-295).

The culture of prison provides considerable explanation for how women adapt to, and learn from, their environment. Subsequently, this informs how they behave upon entering prison. Depending on the intensity of this influence, as well as the women's life experiences and their coping mechanisms, some women may resort to violence as a response to their incarceration. The respondents explain:

You know when I came in, I was eighteen years old, I didn't know anything about prison, I didn't even know what a rat was, and I learned all this shit and I had to learn the hard way most of the time. You know how prison life is and all the stuff. I was only eighteen years old, I had to grow up in this kind of environment. I'm a product of what they made...It rubs off, I think. Like if I am always around violence, it's going to make me a violent person. I don't think people are violent people – they have violent tendencies [Emily].

And after a couple of years like that, it's like it's just natural for you but it's not good because you get out, and you're the same as what you was in jail [Sara].

The culture of prison contains many crucial and interacting elements. However, three factors are explored here. The inmate code, associates and incompatibles, and the method of survival demonstrate the multiple dynamics of prison culture in women's prisons.

The Inmate Code

The inmate code can be described as the set of informal rules and practices determined and adhered to by the large majority of women in prison. This may include not reporting or charging other inmates, avoiding particular insults during an argument (i.e., goof, rat), or not making false accusations with regard to an individual's involvement in an incident. These examples are demonstrated in the following responses:

Don't rat. Don't talk about it. [Susan]

There is also the jail code of ethics. You don't charge each other and you don't tell on each other. [Annie]

She said what she said and I said what I said and a fight broke out. That's like there's some things you can say and there's some things you can't. There's some things you can say to some people that you can't say to others. [Emily]

This code is evident in all correctional institutions; however, there may be a stronger presence in maximum-security units such as Saskatchewan Penitentiary or Springhill Institution. For instance, one participant noted: "usually out west they go by a really strong con code and there's things you can not say and things you can say in an argument" [Emily]. In contrast, the code remains a pressing influence in other security institutions only in circumstances when severe violence occurs. Violence in these cases can be attributed to violating the code. One woman incarcerated at a regional facility, a multi-level security institution, remarked: "when fights rarely break out and it's something serious, it's because someone's a rat. Something happened, and it all comes down to the con code" [Emily]. The intensity and

frequency of enforcing the code, as well as, the consequences of violating the code appear to be partly dependent on the security of the institution.

Women in prison feel compelled to abide by the informal rules of the environment in order to be accepted by their fellow inmates and ultimately as a method for their own survival. Women who do not follow the inmate code appear to be both instigators and victims of violence. Strong associations and relationships can be also formed with women who closely abide by and enforce the rules (i.e., networks of friends or associates). It is not clear how the inmate code becomes known to a person, nor how it has become intertwined in their daily lives, but it undoubtedly presents a source of violence when violated and disregarded by offenders.

Associates and Incompatibles

Part of the inmate code encompasses the interaction among and between “associates” and “incompatibles”⁵⁵. Associates refer to women who are strongly connected as a group of friends who provide each other with emotional and even physical support in the event of an altercation with other inmate(s) or staff. In contrast, incompatibles refer to women who often have “personality clashes” with other inmates due to conflicting attitudes and behaviours. The following women further explain these two groups:

Like me and my friends, we didn’t get along with certain other women...I didn’t get along with other people, like I argued and I fought. Cuz there’s sometimes you meet people you just don’t like, or they just do things that irritate you [Emily].

⁵⁵ Terms often used by CSC operational staff.

I'm a person who got like a lot of little cliques and like you know most of the time, my friends see me getting [involved in] verbal violence...they're going to be kind of on my side [Sara].

It just depends on the inmates. If you have a bunch of people who don't get along with each other, they'll fight. If you have people who are compatible, they'll get along [Annie].

According to one woman, her friends were separated from each other into different institutions as a result of both their collective and individual violence.

Like me and all my friends were all separated. We're all in different institutions. And of course, we're not going to get mad? We can't even see our families, we can't even see our kids, we can't even phone very often because we're all the way across the country [Emily].

But as she explained, this arrangement had its advantages:

If I had a problem with a woman here and we had a beef like hard, she wouldn't be able to do time nowhere...because why? Because all of my friends are everywhere...Yeah, well if you put me in and this other girl in the same room, we don't get along, and she wants a transfer, she goes there, my friend is going to give her a hard time. She transfers somewhere else, I got another friend there too [Emily].

In comparison, other women were incompatible in the sense that they would complain to the guards, provoke each other, and argue with one another. Some women were described as "hypocrites", "jealous", and "immature" [Sara]:

Put a couple of women together and it's like they're all jealous about one another or talking behind their back. Women are hypocrite[s] you know, and they like just talk and talk. I don't know, I got a hard time with that [Sara].

These types of personality characteristics often created a clear division between some women with regard to living arrangements and the general atmosphere.

The anger and tension generated among incompatibles often result in verbal and physical violence. Some institutions may experience more verbal violence (i.e.,

multi-level security) whereas institutions that have a stronger inmate code may witness more serious violence (i.e., maximum security). Groups of associates may form for a variety of other reasons rather than serving a purpose in violence. It appears that collective violence against an incompatible by a group of associates is rare. More often, the support and encouragement of the associate group takes precedence rather than their physical assistance in a dispute. This relates to the strong emphasis placed on individuality and independence in violence discussed later.

Violence as a Survival Method

The survival of prison life illuminates the context in which violence emerges including the reasons for, motivation behind, and purpose of violence in prison. As will be discussed, the ability of women to maintain their pride, respect, and independence are central to this mode of survival. In describing the purpose that violence serves, one woman explained:

Before it was like a way to say I'm angry, I'm hurting, leave me alone. After awhile, after I hit the penitentiary, it was because you have to walk the beat. Otherwise, you're going to make yourself more of a victim. After awhile, after being a victim of violence, I became the victimizer. That was all done through instinct...without conscience [Susan].

As this quotation demonstrates, a transformation occurs in which the woman demonstrates her potential to be aggressive and violent to surrounding individuals. This acts as a survival strategy in which violence is the primary force. The same respondent further describes her involvement in a stabbing within two months of her incarceration. She recollects:

I had to fight because I was getting stabbed. I kept telling her to drop her weapon. She didn't want to. I knew I had to get a jump on her before she

jabbed me. I started to hit and kick her. I didn't feel myself getting stabbed. Because of the threat I was feeling, I blacked out. When I came to, people stopped me from choking her with her hair. I kept hitting her. I had this feeling I couldn't stop there – *I had to show that this is what I can do. It sent a few messages to people who were watching. I was walking alone – that's how I do my time* [Susan - emphasis added].

Another woman describes a similar experience: “But it was like nobody bother me. So I would just show them a side like right away so they [would] leave you alone” [Sara]. An individual's response to a threatening situation such as the one described above may involve the use of intimidating tactics such as swearing, screaming, or kicking objects. Largely, these types of behaviours or reactions are about “play[ing] the game”, “walking alone”, and “walking the beat” [Susan]. More specifically, one woman describes:

You always had to stay on top of the game instead of waiting for someone to come at you again [Susan].

For these women, it was critical to portray an image of strength and autonomy so as to avoid victimization by others. For some, this “violence as survival” may have extended from the outside world and intensified under a continued or perceived threat and inside the prison walls.

The role of pride and respect are central to this particular survival mechanism. Violence serves a survival function in that one can sustain their pride and gain the respect of others. One woman discusses the notion of pride: “pride in prison is very...pride anywhere is important. No one wants to lose their pride in front of a whole bunch of people” [Emily]. For some women, they try to act “tough” and “play” a role in order to gain the respect of individuals who already possess respect:

More like some people trying to show off...try to show a part of them that was not [there]...tried to show off and think they are big and tough [Sara].

They try to play a role, they try to play my role and they don't have it. They talk a big talk [Susan].

Alternatively, other women may want "something" of those who are respected and consequently adopt their methods or model their behaviour to obtain that "something". For example, one woman described:

Say like if you got something somebody wants, they're going to start adopting your methods. Some people adopted my ways...Also because I gave a lot of respect to people. Some people were envious of that. Others had to get respect through aggression. People wanting to challenge me were the ones I was aggressive toward [Susan].

According to this woman, this behaviour was considered "false respect". This type of respect was not highly valued by women who already possessed respect. Clearly, the women interviewed felt they had the respect of others while other women who they have encountered in prison were not able to obtain such respect despite their efforts through the use of violence.

Many times, women maintained their pride and respect and physically defended themselves based on strongly following these principles of survival. The influence of associates and involvement with incompatibles interacted in this goal of survival, and consequently may have often set the stage for how a woman's character was formed and perceived by herself and others. Pride and respect appear almost mutually exclusive – central to each other's function. To obtain these characteristics in prison, women have to demonstrate their ability to survive, and more importantly, to survive independently of each other. This extreme desire for these traits and the belief in survival may lead to violence to serve these purposes. Perhaps not all

women feel the need to have the respect of others or feel they have to survive in this manner, but violent women appear to have used violence for these purposes while other women likely use other coping strategies. The discrepancy between these conflicting responses may depend on an individual's personality or life circumstances, or the extent to which behaviour has been learned or rewarded in the past.

It was also considered very important for a woman's capacity to act alone as an individual. "When you walk alone, it say[s] a lot more for the kind of person you are...willing to take a stand...even if it's against a group of people. In a group, people can still consider you a chicken shit" [Susan]. Similarly, this is echoed by another woman: "I can go on my own...I got a strong character...I don't need nobody to back me up for that" [Sara]. It was clear that the respondents placed a stronger emphasis on individuality compared to a group effort. The women did not explicitly state this behaviour as presuming a leadership type role. However, it was generally recognized that individual behaviour could ultimately affect and influence others to act violently. One woman describes her ability to influence others to be violent:

Sometimes. Well some people – there's leaders and there's followers. And there's people that have no friends really. They're just by themselves so then they see other people...Like if I wanted something to be done, yeah I think anyone really could. It's manipulation, you know, you use manipulation [Emily].

The effectiveness of individual versus collective violence was less clear as it was stated that it often depended on the situation. For example, one woman commented:

Depends what you're doing. Because me, if I have a problem with another inmate, usually I won't get my friends involved unless they want it themselves. I'm not going to go to my friends and say oh, can you go beat her up for me? But if it's with staff, then yeah I will [Emily].

Once again, this relates to the roles played by associates and incompatibles. Groups of associates appear to remain significant but as mentioned, their purpose is primarily connected to their physical presence and emotional support due to the greater emphasis placed on the independence of a woman.

Women felt the need to act independently in violence for two reasons. It served as a central survival mechanism in which it showed others their strength and capacity to defend themselves. It also may have reinforced their importance in a group of associates by which they were able to portray a sense of personal contribution and commitment to the group. A woman's independence also elicited the respect of others and a feeling of personal worth and pride. It appears that violence was more likely to occur among single individuals, in essence reinforcing both independence and an expression of survival. This argument is substantiated by the quantitative data whereby the majority of incidents (67%) had only one instigator.

Institutional Goals: Care and Custody

As elucidated in the women's responses, there appears to be two institutional goals: care and custody. Two informal definitions emerged from the data for the goals of care and custody. In this context, "care" represents treatment-oriented goals focusing on support and rehabilitation in the form of programs and staffing whereas "custody" refers to security oriented goals focusing on control and discipline. These definitions represent the lived reality of violent women who experience the discourse and practice of care and custody. There seems to be a stark contradiction or incompatibility between the goals of care and custody. This has become particularly

evident in the women's discussion on environmental characteristics such as intervention gaps, staff-inmate relationships, physical structure, and mental health needs. In the attempt to achieve both care and custody oriented goals, this inherent contradiction serves as a source of tension, anger, and resentment for women offenders. Ultimately, the incompatible goals disrupt and distort many intervention and reintegration efforts. As a basic response to the nature of this environment, women resort to violence to cope with these conflicting goals and deal with their subsequent frustration and confusion.

Intervention Gaps

In this context, the lack of intervention in the areas of treatment and administration was clearly evident in the women's stories. As suggested by the women, treatment in the form of programs, activities, employment, and/or counseling was either absent, inadequate, or inappropriate for violent women offenders. Similarly, the support networks were not available in the capacity required by the women. These gaps in intervention tended to first, exacerbate poor coping and time management skills, and second, influence disruptive or violent behaviour.

With the exception of one woman offender, it was generally stated that treatment in the form of programs was not consistently provided to all women offenders and in all federal institutions. For example, women respondents who have been incarcerated at maximum-security institutions, indicated that there were very little to no programs available during their period of incarceration⁵⁶. As one woman stated: "I've been in jail a lot but I've never had treatment. At Springhill, there's no

programs. So I've had no programs and I've [been] doing time for over a year" [Annie]. Another respondent similarly stated: "I had so many personal issues myself. I wasn't getting the help I needed. No programs then. No such thing as talking to a screw" [Susan]. However, these responses must be interpreted with caution. Without the precise timeframes or institutions specifically referenced, this information cannot be validated with official data. Women may have the opportunity to participate in programs, but perhaps at that time, they did not feel these particular programs met their specific needs, including their use of violence. Furthermore, women may not be motivated to participate in programs and services, or they may purposively resist any intervention efforts or opportunities.

As a result, the daily routine of prison life became very frustrating and boring for the women due in part to the lack of programs, work, or leisure activities. One result is that women would start arguments and fights with each other:

And then tension goes and it builds and it builds and it builds because there's nothing to do, everyone is bored and they have nothing to do but think about their problems. It's important in jail to keep busy – very important. Cuz if you don't, you'll go crazy – all you have to do is think [Emily].

Lack of programs. We get bored, so we get ourselves into trouble because there is nothing else to do. So we end up not knowing how to deal with anything [Annie].

And a lot of time in an institution like this if violence was to break out, it would be because there's nothing to do and then the women start picking at each other, you know. Like there's a lot of bickering here amongst each other and verbal arguments and stuff like that because there's nothing to do [Emily].

Women indicated the need for not only programs, but consistent and adequate access to employment opportunities and activities:

⁵⁶ The specific time period was not indicated by the respondents.

After work is over, there is nothing to do...there's no activities, there's nothing. There's a gym and a weight room – that's it. And pottery. Who's going to go sit there and paint every night for years? C'mon, well give us something to do then [Emily].

They sit around and watch TV all day. And we get paid to do our jobs and our job takes five minutes. So we get bored. So we argue [Annie].

In this context, it appears that women offenders require concentrated intervention efforts in the form of programs, employment, and activities. The addition of structure, routine, and organization into their daily lives holds the possibility to reduce conflict and violence in this atmosphere. If women's time is consistently and appropriately occupied, they will not only benefit from learning new skills through programs and employment, but it will help to alleviate the sources of stress and frustration, and ultimately assist them in avoiding violence prone situations as a result of monotonous lifestyles.

The content of programs also appeared to impact upon the responses and receptivity of women and consequently their violent reactions to the environment. One respondent specifically suggested programs such as anger management, rational emotive therapy (RET), dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), and trauma and abuse⁵⁷. As noted by this woman, these types of programs are extremely beneficial in dealing with violence because they teach the individual about their thinking and behaviour patterns. She explained:

You have to learn about yourself and the patterns that you have and the thoughts that you think because you don't know, you don't really know, you don't really notice, you don't think about that stuff...It [RET] teaches you like how to stop and think and how you really think and you do think about things [Emily].

⁵⁷ Currently, these programs are offered to women offenders in federal institutions. However, their availability is dependent on each facility.

Further, one woman spoke of the need for Aboriginal holistic programs and counseling, and programs for short-term sentences:

For Aboriginal women, you need holistic programs and counseling which has been available in Sask Penn [Saskatchewan Penitentiary]. For other women, I wouldn't know what they needed. I'll be honest with you, I'm more concerned about my people. We have to take care of our own [Susan].

Better programs are offered to life long sentences of 10 years or more. There's not enough attention being made to the short sentences [Susan].

One interesting comment was in regard to the applicability and appropriateness of programs delivered in the prison setting. As one woman explained:

But in anger management, they don't really give you like tools that you can actually use when the situation arises especially in a prison. Like on the street, yeah you can go walk away right? Like there's the whole world to go. But when you're in prison, what are you suppose to do realistically? Like they give you these situations and you have to act them out – say you're at the shopping mall. We're not at the shopping mall right now [Emily].

The failure to provide adequate coping skills in a potentially coercive and violent environment disallows women to effectively resolve conflict and as a result, some have accumulated additional sentence time for their involvement in violent incidents. In addition, this calls into question the practical utility of many of these skills upon release into the community and women's ability to successfully reintegrate into society.

In general, the women agreed on the importance of both programs and counseling. However, one woman preferred individual counseling as opposed to group counseling or programs, but continued to note the importance of skills training and personal development programs for other women:

It was a psychologist - one on one. That was good for me because I used to be able to talk about things and that person brought me lots more than any program brought me altogether [Sara].

I'm working on myself everyday of my life you know so when I'm doing one of them programs, I'm trying to not critique the program and be honest because some people they still need them programs [Sara].

Although the significance of programs was emphasized, women with violent behavioral problems may not require the group interventions, but rather an individualized treatment plans or an integration of intervention efforts to address their own learning and coping styles. Furthermore, another woman noted the dire need for psychological intervention, but that very few psychologists are readily available at these times:

And a little bit of individual work but their psychiatrist only comes every two to three months. [Annie]

So if I wanted to hurt myself, they'd say wait till psychology comes on in the morning. So if it was 4 o'clock in the afternoon after they had left you had to wait until the morning [Annie].

This lack of treatment may also have affected their ability to effectively cope and address their numerous personal issues.

Another issue was that many of the women are reluctant to discuss personal problems with guards. As well, one woman cast doubt on the motivation of staff to help: "[Staff] manipulate you so you can tell them all this stuff...just like fishing for information...they'll be all nice and manipulate you for you to tell them" [Emily]. It appeared that women clearly preferred to discuss personal issues with psychologists, psychiatrists, or nurses rather than the traditional custodial guard. For various reasons, these practitioners did not represent a source of intimidation or a potential threat. The role of primary workers in the regional facilities was not mentioned in

these interview responses. Surprisingly, family and friends were not mentioned as part of this support network. The provision of treatment in the form of programs, counseling, or employment appears to be a significant need for the women as it would allow them to not only occupy personal time to avoid conflict, but more importantly facilitate their own rehabilitation.

Staff - Inmate Relationships

Staff attitudes and behaviours seem to significantly impact upon the ways in which the women act toward others. According to the respondents, conduct that is clearly detrimental to successful relationships between offenders and staff included staff harassment and provocation such as insults, swearing, manipulation, and disrespect.

It happens all over – power [and] control – they [staff] think they're above God – you're going to find that everywhere [Beth].

Screws are on a big power trip [Susan].

They jiggle their keys when they walk by the cells, swear at you, call you names, tell them [inmates] that they're going home [Susan].

They're abusive. Like physically, sexually, mentally, emotionally [Emily].

They swear and call you names, and try to piss you off. They'll start arguing with you [Emily].

Consequently, this staff-inmate conflict may fuel aggression and frustration and result in collective violence against staff:

They don't realize that when they are egging you on and provoking you and nagging and not giving you anything and all these things for years and years that that shits builds up. Next thing you know, they got broken noses and they got compensation [Emily].

Why? Because they do it first. If I'm arguing with staff, they tell the new crew that's coming on that I started it and [to] give me a hard time. Yeah, you guys want to play like that? There's only four of you and there's twenty-five women here [Emily].

These negative interactions clearly influence women's tendencies to be violent or aggressive and such relationships are likely to dictate both the personal and official responses to treatment, progress, and solutions. As a natural response, women offenders become angry, resentful, and suspicious of much staff assistance or intervention, which consequently affects the extent to which they successfully rehabilitate and integrate into the prison environment. Unfortunately, no staff members were interviewed; therefore no counter argument from their perspective can be offered at this juncture. Certainly it is reasonable to assume that this does not include all staff members. The difficult position of staff must be acknowledged as they attempt to balance the goals of care and custody with a group of women who have aggressive tendencies, poor coping skills, and violent behavioural backgrounds.

In response to this, the respondents suggested some key characteristics that would be beneficial for staff to possess. This included individuals who are understanding, compassionate, empathetic, and respectful:

If they [staff] were more understanding and compassionate, they're wouldn't be a problem. Understanding of what it's like to be locked up [Beth].

Empathy, compassion, understanding, willing to listen, [and] approachable [Susan].

Due to the inherent nature of the prison environment and its corresponding inmate code, it was noted that there are boundaries to these staff-offender relationships.

Women do not want to be viewed as violating the inmate code (i.e., rats) and therefore, such factors must be taken into consideration in these interactions:

Well not too friendly because I don't like that either. Someone who's not disrespectful that's it. Because nobody wants a guard sitting at your room talking to you all the time – everyone is going to think you're a rat. So you can't be too friendly. Just respect you know. Mutual respect [Emily].

Now I look at them [staff] like they're here to do their job and I'm doing my time and that's it [Sara].

From any perspective, it may be difficult to reach an appropriate and healthy balance in a staff-inmate relationship due to past violent inmate behaviour, the restrictive nature of prison life, and institutional rules and procedures. However, women offenders interviewed in this study clearly place a strong emphasis on the need for caring and supportive staff members in a respectful atmosphere.

There were also notable differences detected in the women's responses depending on the security of the institution and the position of the staff member. The maximum-security institutions were described as having guards who did not care about the women and who were "just there to do count" [Susan]. One respondent indicated that an individual would be more likely to engage in violence if the staff did not care about the person:

If you know staff are going to let you get away with it, or if you know staff don't care what you do, you just do it...[and] you're more likely to do it because they don't care if you do it [Annie].

In contrast, the staff (i.e., nurses) at the Regional Psychiatric Centre were perceived as being more concerned with the women including providing them with help, studying their history, and possessing knowledge and training in women's issues:

Here [RPC], they get to know a woman...I'm always thankful for the person who wants to get to know me [Susan].

They're [nurses] more friendlier. And they act like they're concerned and they try to help you [Emily].

The staff here [RPC] are good because they're nurses. And there are more nurses than there are guards. It's not that you have a negative relationship [with guards] but they're not trained to deal with self-harm [Annie].

But at RPC [Regional Psychiatric Centre], it's more program-oriented whereas at Sask Penn [Saskatchewan Penitentiary], it's more to do your time [Emily].

The nature of this relationship may have facilitated a positive response by the women offenders. As one woman commented: "Here [at Regional Psychiatric Centre], they are decent with you. They treat me fairly decent so I've got no need to act out" [Susan]. Yet another woman placed a greater emphasis on staff characteristics than the actual environment:

Prison is prison, no matter how you look at it. A place can be nice, but it's what's inside it that makes it work. You have to have the right players to make it work [Beth].

As evidenced in these examples, nurses took on a caring therapeutic role while guards were clearly security oriented. These roles clearly impacted upon how staff were viewed by inmates and consequently how the women treated and behaved with staff members. As demonstrated, nurses were favoured by most of the women respondents, yet this does not imply that nurses are at a lower risk for assaults or hostage taking by inmates. OMS does not keep record of staff as victims (i.e., number of staff victims, type of staff position) unless there is a formal investigation where it would be detailed. The role of staff at the regional facilities was less clear but certainly was not viewed in an overly negative light by the respondents.

These problems with poor staff attitudes and behaviours were clearly illuminated in the quantitative data. For example, the highest proportion of violent incidents across 6 years occurred in high custody, maximum-security institutions such as Springhill Institution, Prison for Women, and Saskatchewan Penitentiary (Refer to Figure 4). As mentioned, the occurrence of violence in regional facilities was less prominent than the maximum-security institutions with the exception of Grand Valley Institution (Ontario). In addition, staff assaults represented the largest proportion of violent incidents in each year with the exception of the year 2000 (Refer to Table 1).

For two of the respondents who had committed hostage takings, it was felt that their violent behaviour was the most appropriate response considering the reactive nature of prison administration. Prior to the hostage takings, the women spoke of negative interactions with staff including complaints not being addressed, issues of disrespect by staff, and requests not being completed. Some of the reasons specified for the occurrence of the violent incidents were "to get some attention", "to get issues heard", and "to get some changes made" [Susan]. One woman indicated that the violent incidents could have been prevented if the administration had been more proactive in terms of approving requests such as phone calls and institutional transfers. She further explained that verbal warnings had been made to the staff regarding the potential for hostage takings:

I asked and asked and asked and they wouldn't do it...Like those other two times [in reference to hostage takings], I've told them. You know, I'm going to take a hostage man. But they don't believe me so they call my bluff every time. You know after the second two times, you'd think they'd learn, right? Nope...I don't care, you guys can put me in segregation, I'll have more time to think about what I'm going to do and how I'm going to do it. What did they do? They put me in segregation for three days [Emily].

It was also reiterated that incidents could be prevented if women had constructive activities to fulfill their time. It is not clear whether the reactive nature of prison administration is a pattern consistent only in hostage taking incidents, but it remains evident that a more proactive approach to responding to the needs of the women offenders would help to ease feelings of resentment and anger toward staff members.

Physical Structure

The physical structure of the prison environment can also influence the women's individual behaviour and the levels of institutional violence. A more secure and restrictive atmosphere seemed indicative of increased levels of violence. For example, some institutions or units for women offenders were described as "animal like environment[s]" with the women "locked up in little cage[s]" [Susan]. Structures that were characterized by "no privacy", "black bars", and a "bad smell" created feelings of frustration and resentment among the women [Susan]. According to the respondents, the regional facilities clearly provide a more open and free living environment. As the women explained, in violence prone situations, the regional facilities offer greater opportunities for occupying time (i.e., employment, activities), personal space, institutional movement, and distance from other inmates:

I think because the women are not locked in cages. It's more like a home environment...more freedom. [Beth]

It kind of helps me because you got lots of places you can go, you can stay away from people you don't want to see because it's kind of big, you got lots of places to go work. The door [is] open all day until 10:30 so you got time and if something happens and you just want to go outside and work away – take a breath – well you can just go [Sara].

There's more places to go. Like if you're in your house and you get into an argument with somebody else that lives there, you're not stuck on a range with them and you don't have to look at them twenty-four hours a day. It's stable [Emily].

The women respondents highly valued the importance of privacy and space. However, these types of physical characteristics must be provided in combination with respectful and caring staff members. The potential to diffuse verbal and physical altercations may be hastily facilitated if the appropriate outlets are provided (i.e., individual space and time, etc.). These provisions are of course limited in higher security institutions, and for apparent reasons, this continues to present a difficult challenge with regard to the physical structure of inmate accommodations in more secure institutions.

The institutional regime of the prison tended to impact upon the range of solutions to resolve violence and the type of offenders who instigate violence. For instance, women offenders incarcerated at maximum security institutions may be more likely to engage in violence as a result of the more restrictive and closed environment. However, the dilemma is that these women clearly present a security risk and therefore must be detained in a more secure setting. By nature of this atmosphere and its emphasis on custody, women may feel isolated or resentful and retaliate against those individuals who are in close proximity to them. In contrast, women who are incarcerated at more care-oriented institutions may be presented with more treatment options and thus be more respectful of their environment, staff, and other inmates. In this case, women who are classified as maximum security in a

treatment facility may feel less threatened because such emphasis is placed on care and support.

The quantitative results may help to verify that the physical structure may have an effect on the frequency of incidents. For example, these data showed that Springhill Institution (Nova Scotia) has the highest proportion of violent incidents from 1997 to 2002. This may be attributed to the physical layout of unit which has been described as:

very small...a corridor of cells on one side of the unit...on the opposite side of the unit there are intake/assessment and segregation cells...the staff office/post is positioned between the two corridor of cells...[with a] two way mirror viewing the common room...noise is clearly able to travel across the unit (McDonagh, 1999: 86-87).

Because inmates are in close proximity to both inmates and staff, their behaviour is readily observable and any negative or aggressive behaviour is easily detected. In contrast, inmates incarcerated at Saskatchewan Penitentiary (Saskatchewan) are dispersed among three levels and six ranges where behaviour is not so easily observable. In this sense, the security classification of the institution may play a lesser role in the number of reported incidents. Instead, the layout of the facility may determine the frequency in which incidents are first, observed, and secondly, reported. Without a constant staff presence, women may be more likely to engage in violence. Therefore, the prevalence of incidents in other institutions may be much more frequent and severe, but due to the structure of the facility or unit, such violent behaviours are less often detected and recorded.

Mental Health Needs

The practice of incarcerating a special need population with the general population was a clearly identified issue as a source for tension and violence for all respondents. Many of the women in the special needs population have been diagnosed with mental health problems such as borderline personality disorder and schizophrenia. The women respondents explained that it is very difficult for women in the general population to reside with women who are described as having poor physical hygiene and disrespect for personal space, in addition to a host of mental and/or cognitive impairments. The women without mental health problems revealed that it was very “draining” to live with such individuals on a daily basis [Susan]. Some of the women with mental disorders were described as “manipulative”, “provoking”, and “pushy” [Susan]. They were also characterized as having poor personal hygiene and eating habits:

You’re sitting there trying to eat and somebody’s drooling and slobbering their food all over the place...they don’t shower and you have to try to get them in the shower because you don’t want to smell them and they have a shower and their stuff is all over and then they don’t clean it [Emily].

As a result, inmate arguments and fights often ensued at a point of frustration and anger. One woman with a mental disorder echoed this problem: “The inmates would tease me because I have a mental illness...they would put me down for it” [Annie]. Tension existed among the population with mental health problems as well. The same woman explained that the special needs range had its difficulties also because “we all have clashing personalities and we all have symptoms at different times” [Annie]. Conflicting attitudes and behaviours between the special needs population and the general offender population, or among individuals in the general population,

appear to create a very stressful and tense environment, which in these cases, often lead to physical aggression. However, the quantitative data revealed that shared accommodation as a primary factor for violent incidents was present in only 2% of the incidents reviewed. Once again, this may relate to the staff's inconsistent use of information available in incident reports and to poor operational definitions of motivating factors for incidents.

The need for focusing on different goals, care or custody, may depend on the type of offender population. Generally, women with mental health problems were thought to require a more caring and therapeutic environment. One respondent felt that "for someone who has behavioural problems, they need more structure. They can't really interact with people who are normal and who have anger problems and unresolved issues" [Susan]. Another respondent explained that hospitals and treatment were the most appropriate solutions for the special needs population. She further explained that rehabilitation of the individual was not possible in prison, and as a result, women with special needs who required such treatment were not being helped by the current regime:

There's hospitals and treatment for that. Children locked in a woman's body. I don't believe there's rehabilitation inside. It's up to the individual to change. People with special needs need help and I don't think they get that here [Beth].

Not only are special needs women likely to instigate violence, it was previously explained that they are also likely to be targeted as primary victims due to the conflicting personalities between the two populations. One woman who self-identified as having a mental illness indicated the need for increased focus on care for offenders with psychiatric disorders:

There's not enough care for psychiatric patients. There's 12 beds for all female offenders for psychiatric care in Canada. [There is] one girl – she is the most violent inmate you've ever met and she doesn't mean to be. She just can't control it. She needs to be in the hospital. But she can't take treatment, she doesn't understand what treatment is [Annie].

The lack of intervention in this area may consequently impact upon offender rehabilitation and inmate relationships. Additionally, it must be questioned to what extent have women with mental health disorders been equipped with adequate coping skills and alternatively, to what extent have the general offender population been provided with knowledge to deal with the special needs population.

There appears to be a primary distinction between facilities and staff members that focus on security and custody and those that focus on the principles of rehabilitation and treatment. In some instances, institutions may try to incorporate and achieve both goals but as a result of their inherent contradictory nature, may encounter some very difficult challenges finding a healthy and appropriate balance with this particular segment of women offenders. It appears that the management strategy to incarcerating potentially violent individuals may be dependent upon the goals of the institution. This difference is further exemplified according to staff characteristics and roles, the physical structure in which these persons are incarcerated, as well as the needs of the mental health population. According to the women's responses, facilities characterized by custody, discipline, and security appear to increase women's tendencies to act out violently. Comparatively, institutions that focus on care, respect, and support are the most appreciated and valued by women offenders in this study.

Individual and Environmental Characteristics: Exploring the Relationship

The following is a brief summary of the relationship between and within the individual and environmental characteristics explored in this study.

First, individual and environmental factors may interact with one another to varying degrees to produce violence-prone situations and individuals. Some of the variables discussed may have been developed or experienced prior to incarceration (i.e., drug use), and intensified during a prison sentence. Or as a result of abusive histories prior to incarceration, a woman may enter prison and learn to survive as a victimizer rather than as a victim. Alternatively, the violent tendencies of an individual may have originated upon contact with the prison environment due to exposure to a subculture that reinforces violent attitudes and behaviour. Most likely, women are coming into prison with varying life experiences ranging from drug use, street survival, mental health problems, criminal histories, and histories of abuse, and encountering an environment with conflicting messages and goals. It is reasonable to assume that most women would respond more positively to caring and nurturing environments rather than secure custodial arrangements. The discrepancies between the goals of care and custody, as well as the gaps in intervention for this particular population, produce circumstances in which women resort to violence as a method of survival, coping, and resistance.

Ultimately, individual factors or experiences are related to the person's surrounding environment – the nature and degree of exposure to a negative or even violent atmosphere can influence an individual to react in certain predisposed, unpredictable ways. A relative amount of certainty can be ascertained in that both individual and environmental characteristics influence behaviour. Although this

study cannot demonstrate this exact relationship, it appears that certain factors elicit violent responses by women. While these factors are important to consider, the individual response of the person is at the center of the investigation. For example, it is likely that two women with similar life circumstances and prison experiences may react in different ways to any given situation. This response may depend on the level of intervention in the prison, personal coping mechanisms/strategies, current exposure to criminal subcultures, or past behaviour and experiences. This argument coincides with the assumptions of the interactionist model described earlier in which equal importance is placed on the individual and environment to influence behaviour.

Second, several different influences in the environment may impact or influence each other. Intervention gaps contribute to prison culture. For instance, offenders in maximum-security may face more stringent rules and enforcement of the code, offenders with mental health issues are often seen as incompatibles, custodial type staff may contribute to a stronger inmate code, or the inmate code may dictate hostilities toward intervention efforts in the form of programs or staff assistance. The overreaching point is that these factors interact to represent sources for violence. Alternatively, and according to the women's responses, possible solutions to violence include programs and activities to consume time, appropriate coping mechanisms via counseling and program content, caring and understanding staff members, and less restrictive and secure environments.

Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis: Integrating Data Sources

At this time, it is also necessary to summarize some of the similarities and differences between the quantitative and qualitative data sources.

The qualitative data analysis was able to expand on the profile of violent instigators with regard to the problems produced by the prevalence of mental health and personal/emotional needs. Although mental health problems were identified for almost one-fifth of the population of the study, the consequences of this need were tremendous in perpetrating violence. Clearly, mental health needs represent a problem with regard to accommodation strategies, and ultimately levels of violence. Additionally, the women's responses reiterated the importance of focusing on emotional/personal needs through appropriate intervention strategies. Both in the qualitative and quantitative data, it was revealed that poor coping strategies and problem solving skills were ineffective for preventing and resolving violence. Furthermore, it was seen from the qualitative data that the characteristics of pride, respect, and independence are key survival traits, which was information unavailable from the statistics portion of this study.

The qualitative data was also able to reaffirm that individual violence was more frequent than collective violence. For example, many women emphasized the importance of autonomy and strength in their responses while the data supported this claim with the majority of incidents reporting one instigator. The qualitative data was also able to further explore some of the findings in the quantitative analysis with regard to types of incidents and location of incidents. The women in this study clearly indicated that negative staff attitudes and behaviours and security-oriented institutions fostered more violent behaviour. This was validated by the quantitative data whereby the most frequent incident perpetrated was against staff members and the largest proportion of violent incidents occurred in maximum-security institutions.

Although OMS allows for primary factors or indicators for institutional incidents to be recorded, the quantitative data indicates that a very low proportion of these factors were applicable to violent incidents committed by women offenders. However, it was evident by the women's responses that drugs and accommodation, two quantitative measures of violence, were in fact dominant influences for violent behaviour.

For the most part, the qualitative and quantitative data support each other with very few contradictions found in the two data sources. The qualitative data enabled the researcher to further support and validate the findings of the quantitative data, while the women's responses allowed for a more thorough exploration into the causes and reasons for women's violence. At the same time, the qualitative data analysis provided ample investigation of the link between individual and environmental characteristics that influence violent behaviour in women's prisons. Although the exact degree of this relationship can not be isolated, this investigation identifies some key influences that can be examined in the future.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The remaining chapter in this thesis discusses the contribution of this academic work to the past research literature on women offenders who are violent while incarcerated in prison. This is followed by a brief summary of the main findings while linking the results to the literary⁵⁸ and theoretical⁵⁹ perspectives previously outlined. Finally, consideration is made of program and policy implications, the study limitations are reviewed, and directions for future research are suggested.

Contributions to Criminological Literature

The past literature on violent women offenders in custody have examined minor disciplinary infractions among women offenders and compared male and female prison behaviour, while most of the data are primarily from other international sources. This thesis has examined serious violence in women's prison from a Canadian perspective and does not rely on comparing female and male prison violence. This exploratory work contributes to the understanding of female prison violence on three dimensions: the nature and extent of violence in women's prisons, a profile of violent women instigators, and the individual and environmental factors influencing this violent behaviour. To the author's knowledge, this is the first academic or professional inquiry of this nature in Canada.

⁵⁸ See Chapter 1.

⁵⁹ See Chapter 2.

The majority of researchers in the field of women offenders, including feminists, have primarily focused on women as victims and concentrated on their experiences of victimization both inside and outside prison. Furthermore, there has been a heavy reliance on women's violence against themselves (i.e., suicide, self-injury). The present investigation explored women's use of violence against others including the reasons for this aggression. Through this examination, the themes of victimization and self-violence indirectly emanate from the data sources. The author fully acknowledges women's capacity to be violent and aggressive in a prison environment, notwithstanding some of the precursors or motivations for this behaviour. Furthermore, this is recognized outside of the male dominated research in this area, and beyond the traditional reliance on women's role in family-like bonds or lesbian relationships in prison.

One of the primary strengths of this study lies in its incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and data sources. Quantitative data provided an introductory framework into the characteristics of violent incidents and their perpetrators. Interviews were conducted with women offenders who have committed violent incidents to further expand and validate the quantitative data. This qualitative analysis also allowed for women's perspectives and experiences to highlight the potential causes and nuances of violence in this context. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data is highly valued by many researchers, while the inclusion of women's voices is strongly urged by feminists.

Summary of Main Research Findings

From January 1st, 1995 to December 31st, 2001, there have been 373 violent incidents with at least one woman offender identified as committing the incident. For the purposes of this study, violent incidents consisted of murder, hostage-takings, staff assaults, inmate assaults, visitor assaults, inmate fights, and major disturbances. The majority of the incidents involved one instigator, which was a consistent trend across staff and inmate assaults. This particular result has been replicated from past research where individual acts of violence are the most common among women offenders (Shaw & Dubois, 1995; Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986). The occurrence of staff assaults has, with the exception of two years, represented the highest proportion of violence in women's institutions. Previous studies have discovered the same trend (Spektorov-McClellan 1994; Tischler & Marquart, 1989). The maximum-security unit for women at Springhill Institution in Nova Scotia experienced the greatest number of incidents in the six-year time frame. Research has also found that violence was most frequent in higher security institutions (Shaw & Dubois, 1995; Shaw, 1991; Mandaraka Sheppard, 1986).

The incident rate⁶⁰ indicates an increase of violence between 1995 and 1996, which corresponds to the series of events⁶¹ occurring in this year and the opening of the regional facilities and three co-located units for women offenders (Refer to Appendix C). The rate remains stable from 1997 to 1999, but dramatically increases in 2000, corresponding to the closure of the Prison for Women, and the subsequent

⁶⁰ Calculated rate for number of incidents per 100 inmates.

⁶¹ See historical overview in the Introduction.

inmate transfers from Prison for Women to other women's facilities. Finally, the rate peaks in 2001 when the Structured Living Units were incorporated into the design of the regional facilities. These trends, with all probability taken into consideration, may demonstrate that an environment characterized by transition, disruption, and uncertainty is conducive to violence by the recipients of this disorder. Research has also found that environmental changes are often stressful events and consequently result in a difficult period of adjustment for individuals, especially in the arousal of anxiety and anger (Bowman, 1997: 375). The Mental Health Strategy (2002) also emphasizes that transfers in and out of environments must be managed in a way that minimizes difficulties in adjustment (Laishes, 2002: 18).

The underlying implications for the opening of the regional facilities, co-located units, and the structured living units and their impact on women's behaviour must be further outlined here. The political underpinnings of the decisions to open and close the co-located units, and more recently to open the secure units in order to manage violent women offenders has important consequences. Historically, many external critics have argued for fundamental changes. This pattern of change is evident beginning with the origins of Creating Choices, the closure of Prison for Women, the opening of the regional facilities, the creation of co-located units in male penitentiaries, and the more recently the closure of these same units. Ironically, these are the same individuals to quickly critique the system when these changes are not entirely successful. More reasonably, it can be assumed that an appropriate way to achieve positive and successful change, is to investigate the population under study and to evaluate the current management and intervention practices, in order to

ultimately base correctional operations on evidenced-based research. It must be noted that much of the change has been well intended but this is difficult to achieve under political pressure and rapid change. The opening of the secure units in the regional facilities may also experience similar problems associated with transition and disruption. This initial period of adjustment requires careful and slow implementation with a balance between the goals of care and custody.

The balance between the goals of care and custody deserves more sensitive and thorough discussion. Although, the women respondents strongly emphasized the importance of a regime based on care, treatment, and support, the realities of achieving this goal are constrained by operational and management objectives. Due to the persistent behavioural problems instigated by this group, there is clearly a need to ensure the safety of staff members and other inmates. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that there are instances in which a treatment approach is unlikely to be effective in deterring or resolving violent behaviour. However, it is most important to emphasize that these “treatment” options and alternatives must be present, alongside a respectful and caring staff approach. The responses to violence must be indicative of a model of learned behaviour with positive reinforcements and role modelling. Furthermore, this type of behaviour may be best combated with individualized treatment approaches and short-term behavioural contracts or agreements. These suggestions do not imply a lack of responsibility and accountability on the part of women who instigate violence, however, it is crucial that women have these provisions available, and collectively work with staff to progress towards such goals.

The profile of violent women perpetrators (n=256) demonstrates that women who have committed violent incidents tend to be Caucasian, single, and between the ages of 26 to 35. However, when compared to a snapshot of women offenders in custody, it was discovered that Aboriginal women were over-represented in their involvement in violent incidents compared to their representation in the women offender population in general (30% and 27%, respectively). This Aboriginal over-representation in violent incidents has been documented elsewhere (Shaw et al., 1992) while Aboriginal women offenders are also over-represented in terms of violent crimes upon admission to federal custody (Solicitor General of Canada, 2002). Furthermore, previous research has consistently reported young, single women offenders as the primary violators of prison rules and recipients of discipline charges (Shaw & Dubois, 1995; Shaw et al., 1992; Mandaraka Sheppard, 1986; Faily, Roundtree, & Miller, 1980; Faily & Roundtree, 1979; Jensen & Jones, 1976).

The needs of women offenders who have committed violent incidents were reported on two dimensions. The women in this group were assessed as having moderate to high emotional/personal needs and low to moderate mental health needs. Violent women perpetrators demonstrated somewhat similar levels of emotional/personal needs compared to women in a one-day snapshot; however, violent perpetrators were more likely to be currently diagnosed with a mental disorder (19%) and prescribed medication (37%). This is comparable to a study that reported that incarcerated women offenders in Canada had been diagnosed with schizophrenia (7%), major depression (19%), and antisocial personality disorder (29%) (Rivera, 1996). CSC does not systematically record the types of mental health disorders in the

offender population. In addition, the prevalence of mental health may not be accurately captured by the current system of record keeping. However, within this study, the pervasiveness of mental health needs was a clear source of violence, and an area that warrants investigation with regard to intensity of needs, treatment approaches, and intervention strategies.

In terms of offence characteristics, one-quarter of violent women perpetrators were incarcerated for robbery, while one-fifth were incarcerated for assault and a further one-fifth were incarcerated for homicide⁶². The majority of the women were serving a sentence from 2 to 4 years. Women offenders in the snapshot were less likely to be incarcerated for assault. This is consistent with research that has shown that women serving shorter sentences are more likely to be charged with disciplinary infractions (Faith, 1993; Shaw, 1991; Shaw & Dubois, 1995; Lindquist, 1980). However, a similar proportion of women in the snapshot were also incarcerated for 2 to 4 year sentences. Overall, women offenders are typically incarcerated for relatively short sentences (MacDonald, 2001) and therefore this finding may have no relevance to involvement in prison violence. Women who have committed violent incidents also had extensive youth and adult criminal histories, especially when compared to women in the snapshot.

An investigation of the individual and environmental influences for female prison violence comprised the qualitative component of this study. According to the women's responses, *drug use*, *victimization*, and *violence as self-representation* signified the individual factors that contributed to women's violent behaviour.

⁶² These proportions represent the most serious offence.

Although the prevalence of abuse histories among the women offender population has long been documented (CSC, 1990), its link to violence is less established. However, the socialization process in which violent values and beliefs are normalized, and thus in which violent behaviour becomes a learned response to the environment, has been acknowledged in the field of corrections:

The 'normalizing' of violence in the life circumstances of some women and its impact on establishing a tolerance for violence as well as learning its use as a coping/survival strategy (CSC, 1995: 18).

The influence of drugs on prison behaviour, and more broadly substance abuse, has been also recognized as a source of violence by correctional officials:

Substance abuse is a major problem area for women inmates and is often a precipitating factor in violent incidents (CSC, 1995: 11).

Accordingly, these histories of abuse and experiences with substance abuse have been incorporated into program interventions for women offenders (see CSC, 1995b). Women's violence as a representation of the self appears to take both 'expressive' and 'instrumental' forms. This finding is in stark contrast to the conclusions made by previous researchers whereby women's violence is purely 'expressive': it represents a release of tension and a loss of control. From this, it can be suggested that violence perpetrated by women can be purposeful and strategic, while it may duly represent a sense of lost control. These representations may be partly dependent on the type of violence instigated by women. Collective forms of violence considered in this regard, such as hostage takings, may represent planned, tactical approaches by individual persons or groups.

The role of the environment required more extensive and elaborate investigation. *Prison culture* and *institutional goals* represented the two dominant

themes in this section of the analysis. The culture of the prison also included a discussion on the inmate code, associates and incompatibles, and violence as a survival method. McDonagh (1999) similarly identified the inmate code and incompatibility between the general and the special needs populations as sources for inmate conflict. Additionally, women's reliance on violence as a survival mechanism was clearly indicated in the present findings. Women interviewed in this study highly valued respect, pride, and independence as these characteristics were central to the purpose and motivation for violence. Similarly, the importance of respect, self-image, and status for women offenders has been noted elsewhere (Jones, 1993; Fox, 1982).

The institutional goals broadly encompassed intervention gaps in terms of programs and employment, in addition to, staff-inmate relationships, physical structure, and mental health needs. The need to provide constructive programs and activities both to occupy personal time, to offer structure, and to build appropriate coping skills were recognized by the respondents as key intervention targets. Women also require the proper outlets to express their emotions (i.e., counseling) at regular and frequent intervals. Consistent with previous offender research, participation in employment and treatment programs in prison has been found to be positively associated with low institutional misconduct and positive adjustment (DeRosia, 1999; McCorkle, Miethe & Drass, 1995). Furthermore, it was acknowledged that the content of current programs may not be appropriate to meet the needs of violent women offenders. More specifically, these comments were in reference to acquiring relevant coping and problem solving skills while incarcerated and upon release into

the community. This evidence provides legitimate support for the development of a treatment program that incorporates elements of cognitive-behavioural theory and a social learning approach with a specific focus on violence.

The knowledge base at present has strongly confirmed the role of organizational and management practices, and more specifically, staff-inmate relations, and their capacity to generate aggressive inmate behaviour (Croteau, 2000; McDonagh, 1999; Stevens, 1998; Shaw et al., 1992; Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986; Fox, 1982). These findings resemble some similarities to the management perspective (DiIulio, 1987) which views poor prison management as indicative to disorder and violence. Some of the indicators of poor management from this perspective are lapses in security, staff turn-over rates, and staff-inmate ratios. These factors were not present in this study; however, the overall management of the institution can be viewed as a dominant and pressing influence. For example, it was clearly illustrated in the women's responses that staff-inmate relationships and a reactive prison administration were characteristic of a weak management approach and consequently, represented an avenue for violence to originate.

Finally, the physical accommodation and mental health needs of the incarcerated population were demonstrated as influential on women's behaviour. These results duplicate past research, which has found that small and secure settings are conducive to violence (McDonagh, 1999). Alternatively, these same areas were sometimes the most visible to officials thereby allowing incidents to be more often witnessed and reported by staff. Violence was a serious consequence for accommodating women offenders in the general population with the special needs

population (Croteau, 2000; McDonagh, 1999). Issues of personal space, respect, and personality differences created violence-prone situations and hostile atmospheres. Besides the basic incompatibility issues between the general and special needs populations, these findings are consistent with past research that has concluded that the needs of women with mental health problems are not met when incarcerated with women who do not have the same mental and cognitive deficits (Croteau, 2000; McDonagh, 1999). The special needs of this population required a more therapeutic, caring environment with a decreased focus on custody and security.

Through this investigation, it has become apparent that violent women offenders undergo a process of labelling which consequently informs staff attitudes and dictates official responses to violence. Violent perpetrators may encounter stigma or labels as a result of their past behaviour, and discover that it is increasingly difficult to successfully progress through their period of incarceration. As a result, this group of women may demonstrate none to minimal progress given that staff may possess high behavioural expectations. As one woman in this study commented:

They're [women] in segregation for like six months, they'll only be out for a certain [time] like twenty days maximum then they're back into segregation. And they start [re]integration plans but then they [staff] use that against you. If you do this, we'll take this away from you – what you've just earned, you know. You've spent the last three weeks earning you know an extra hour out and if you tell the guard to fuck off, they'll take it back [Emily].

These experiences may have a detrimental impact on women's improvement. If women do not experience a personal sense of achievement or tangible results, they may be less inclined to continue participating in programs or complying with their correctional plan and therefore they may fail to develop adequate coping skills in

order to reduce their violent behaviour. This labelling process has been documented in previous research (Shaw, 1995; Shaw et al., 1992; Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986):

To be a woman and to be seen as violent is to be especially marked in the eyes of the administrators...and in the eyes of the staff who guard them. Among women we do not fit the stereotypes, and we are automatically feared, and labelled as in need of special handling. The label violent begets a self-perpetuating and destructive cycle...everything follows from this label...the prison regime that follows serves to reinforce the violence that is supposedly designed to manage (Sugar & Fox, 1990: 7).

Women offenders may be forever trying to escape the violent label and be caught in a self-defeating cycle. Women may become more resentful, angry, and isolated and continue to engage in violence as a result. One woman in this study describes her fight to dispose of her label:

People seem to forget about that – they see she’s violent but no one bothers to ask what their issues are – [she’s] labelled...I had a big bad label when I came here and I’ve had to work very hard to overcome it...People see the label on me [Susan].

From a women offender’s perspective, there appear to be limited benefits to treating violent women offenders on a different behavioural scale from non-violent women. Although it may be more difficult for staff to maintain objective and optimistic views about this sub-population, the cycle of violence characteristic of this group has not demonstrated long-term positive or safe outcomes for either inmates or staff. This is a difficult concept to overcome due to the need to maintain the safety and protection of staff, inmates, and the overall operational unit.

The theoretical relevance of the results of this study can be traced to the prison adjustment theories outlined earlier. The deportation model views prison violence as an adjustment to the “pains of imprisonment”. Women offenders may resist the power and social structures inherent in prison, and such, violence is a response to this

hardship. This includes the power relationships between staff and inmates and the conflict that generates from this relation. Violence as a survival method represented elements of the deprivation model whereby women attempt to secure respect and status to combat potential threats and portray an image of “toughness” to deter possible instigators. In contrast, the importation model views the socialization and experiences prior to prison as determinants of violence. The women respondents clearly indicated the role of the inmate code and its ability to shape attitudes and behaviour related to violence. In this instance, women offenders may bring a set of attitudes and beliefs to this environment which contribute to the inmate subculture, or alternatively, they may be influenced by this culture. Violence is a consequence of violating the informal set of rules, and in upholding this code of conduct. This code is also responsible for violence instigated against institutional staff.

The significance of individual and environmental characteristics on women’s behaviour in prison has been well documented (Croteau, 2000; McDonagh, 1999; Shaw et al., 1992; Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986). Based on the qualitative data, it appears that the presence of both individual and environmental influences greatly influence behaviour. This finding is supported by the integrative or interactionist model, which considers both internal and external forces as determining the degree and type of adjustment to prison (Zamble & Porporino, 1988; Thomas, 1977). It has become evident that violent behaviour in prison cannot be solely examined in terms of either individual or environmental influences, but a combined and integrated approach can successfully contribute to and expand our understanding of this phenomenon. An analysis of this relationship suggests that women enter prison with

a set of life circumstances and past experiences in addition to pre-developed beliefs and values about violence. In prison, they encounter a host of environmental or situational based stimuli which interacts with their previous experiences and personalities to result in various forms of maladjusted, negative behaviour. The type of response for each woman is individualized and depends partly on personal coping styles and survival mechanisms. Ultimately, it appears that violence has become a learned response based on women's experiences with the environment, both inside and outside the prison walls.

Program and Policy Implications

Numerous program and policy implications can be suggested as a result of this academic inquiry. These include improvements to incident reporting and recording, operational and management framework, mental health accommodation, and violence prevention program development. With these suggestions, various relevant policies would have to be amended (Refer to Appendix H).

The quantitative data source for this study, the Offender Management System (OMS) of the Correctional Service of Canada, revealed some potential areas of improvements for reporting and recording institutional incidents. For instance, many of the pre-determined incident indicators such as “drugs” and “accommodation” were not reported as instigating indicators in violent incidents perpetrated by women despite their strong prevalence in the qualitative data. More gender appropriate and relevant indicators may need to be developed for women offenders. This suggestion is also consistent some of the other variables including weapon use and the type of methods used (i.e., kicking, punching, etc.). Furthermore the potential of the incident

synopses to provide information on the incidents was lacking in some instances. The need to clearly document these incidents, including methods and indicators, may serve a preventive purpose in terms of developing pre-incident indicators specific to women offenders. Finally, the incident role and instigator types require clearly stated definitions for staff in the institutions to follow. For example, the instigator types range from 'commit' to 'threaten to commit' to 'suspected', and without operational definitions, large variations in how these types are reported will inevitably occur across institutions and staff members.

The operational and management framework for this particular population of women offenders requires a careful and thorough examination given the history of problems associated with their overly aggressive and violent behaviour. To date, the five guiding principles outlined in Creating Choices⁶³, have not been well received or achieved with this small number of women. The further unsuccessful balance between the institutional goals of care and custody has further convoluted this process. The "dual personality of corrections" described as the promotion of conflicting objectives such as therapy and discipline (Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988) presents unique challenges for women who resort to violence in prison. A strategy that is characterized by a secure, controlled and isolated environment has been clearly documented by the respondents as detrimental to their behaviour and attitudes. A structured routine in order to positively occupy their time and facilitate skill development, accompanied by a treatment module aimed at addressing violence as a learned response to the environment, appear to be the most appropriate responses.

⁶³ See Chapter 1.

Staff may require training to help facilitate positive and caring relationships with inmates, to understand the dynamics of learned behaviour, and to acquire the most appropriate responses to intervention. A more proactive management and administration approach signifies another form of intervention, which requires improvement from the current correctional practices identified in this research.

The accommodation of special needs offenders with the general population undoubtedly warrants remedial action. Beyond program development, one of the primary suggestions of this research is that the Regional Psychiatric Unit (Saskatchewan) for federally sentenced women must be utilized for the purpose of incarcerating all offenders with special needs including those with mental disorders and cognitive impairments. The link between the violent behaviour of women with and without mental disorders has been established in this study and elsewhere (McDonagh, 1999):

This level of psychiatric intervention is best provided in an intensive residential treatment setting such as the Churchill Unit of the Regional Psychiatric Centre (Laishes, 2002: 21).

The best response for women offenders functioning at this capacity is a supportive and caring environment. Unfortunately, the number of beds at RPC does not accommodate the number of women with mental disorders in the federal correctional system, and there also exists the problem of geographical dislocation for some women. In addition, it is of the author's opinion that several gaps continue to exist with regard to mental health intervention, namely, its significance to the safe functioning of each operational unit, and the effective rehabilitation of offenders.

Given the results of this research, there is a clear need for a program that specifically targets women offenders who are violent while incarcerated. This group of women are diverse in themselves with challenges including, but not limited to, mental health, self-harm, cognitive impairments, substance abuse, and histories of victimization. This group of instigators may also differ in terms of the extent or frequency of their violent behaviour. For instance, some women offenders may be considered repeat or habitual instigators of prison violence, while others may occasionally resort to violence. The nature and context of the incident must also be taken into consideration. Some women may engage in either or both collective or individual violence, or similarly, staff and/or inmate directed violence. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, CSC has recently proposed a multi-modal program to address the needs of violent women both in the context of their offence and institutional histories. Although it would be impossible to develop a program to meet the unique needs of each woman, there have been some common links identified in the process of this research that may serve to identify key intervention areas.

Study Limitations

Taking into consideration that this study represents an exploratory and descriptive analysis of violent incidents, there are some limitations to its design and approach. Due to the nature of this inquiry, this examination includes a relatively small number of violent incidents and women perpetrators. The quantitative data source, OMS, has some potential limitations with regard to its reliability for reporting and recording incidents. For instance, there may be variation across institutions and staff members with regard to how incident definitions are interpreted, how policy is

enforced or applied, the extent in which minor or serious incidents are reported, and the accuracy of recorded incident synopses. The reliability of the qualitative interviews must be slightly cautioned as the honesty of the respondents cannot be measured, and with only five interviews conducted, the sample does not represent the entire population of violent women perpetrators. In addition, no interviews were conducted with staff members, therefore, no alternative perspective can be offered in relation to the women's responses. Lastly, no correlation or regression analysis was performed to determine associations between any of the variables identified in this study. Therefore, we can only speculate within reason, any relationships between the individual and environmental factors.

Future Research

Based on the current research results, some directions for future research can be suggested. Using the same subjects as in this study, other research approaches may employ pre- and post-designs on this population to further assess changes in their attitudes and behaviours through program participation, institutional transfers, involuntary segregation, or security reclassifications. A comparison group comprised of women who have not committed violence, but matched on several variables (i.e., age, race, risk, security level) could examine several outcome measures upon release such as recidivism, substance abuse, self-harm, community incidents, and family relationships to determine differences between the groups. There may also be further investigation into the role of the inmate code or subculture, supervision or surveillance practices, and types of disciplinary punishment. The application of anger

or aggression related scales⁶⁴ to comparison groups or the distribution of inmate questionnaires to the entire women offender population may be useful in determining the frequency of violence via different data sources. Other methodologies may include international comparisons, or male–female comparisons in a Canadian context.

The findings of this research indicate that staff assaults, individual violence, and frequent perpetrators appear to be the main sources of violence. This warrants further examination of the occurrence of staff assaults, inmate reliance on individuality (i.e., individual versus collective violence), and typologies of violent perpetrators (i.e., habitual versus atypical violent perpetrators). From the conclusions based on the incident rate, the historical impact of the closure for Prison for Women, the opening of the five regional facilities, and development of secure units, may provide insight into how these major milestones have affected the institutional milieu and specifically the rate of violence. Clearly, the results indicate that the relationship between self-injurious behaviour and violence, and the prevalence of mental health disorders and violence needs to be further investigated. From two different perspectives, staff and inmates as victims represent important sources of information both in their abilities to validate or disconfirm the results found in this study. Interviews with staff members about their attitudes and experiences with violent incidents may help to identify contributing factors and prevention strategies. As well, interviews with inmates who have been victimized by other inmates may also further identify precursors to violent incidents.

⁶⁴ See Crump (1995).

Concluding Remarks

The discovery of the violent woman offender has been a long and arduous process in federal corrections in Canada. Almost a decade ago, correctional thought about violent women in prison began to transform:

What has changed is the 'discovery' that women can be violent, and that cottages are not the place for misbehaviour." (Shaw, 1999: 256).

This process has allowed us to discover that women offenders can be, and are violent outside the context of abuse and homicide related offences. Official discourse and feminism has typically displaced women's potential for violence and surrounded their behaviour in the concepts of victimhood and learned helplessness. As Shaw notes:

This failure to confront the issue of women's use of violence other than as a response to continued partner violence is not restricted to that Task Force alone, but has been characteristic of feminist accounts of women and violence within criminology more generally (Shaw, 1999: 258).

Despite this, the moral agency and personal responsibility of women perpetrators must be acknowledged and attributed for in correctional policy and practice.

This study has uncovered that the behaviour of violent women perpetrators in prison is dually motivated by individual and environmental factors. There is evidence that the institutional goals of care and custody are especially difficult to balance with this population and their incompatibility with each other create their own impediments to successful intervention. The treatability of women in this context is surrounded by the concepts of care, intervention, and rehabilitation. Alternatively, the management of this population is concerned with control, discipline, and security. Accordingly, the operational and management framework, including programming, security, accommodation, and mental health, require clearly articulated goals and

philosophies that have been substantiated with research evidence prior to delivery and implementation. The success of incarcerating and rehabilitating violent women instigators in prison strongly depends on careful “forethought” of this population.

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APPENDIX A

Government Commissions and Task Forces

- 1938 Royal Commission on the Penal System – Archambault Commission
- 1969 Report of the Canadian Committee on Corrections - Ouimet Report
- 1970 The Royal Commission on the Status of Women
- 1974 National Advisory Committee on the Female Offender – Clarke Report
- 1977 Parliamentary Sub-Committee Report on the Penitentiary System in Canada – MacGuigan Report
- 1978 Report on the Joint Committee to Study Alternatives for the Housing of the Federal Female Offender - Chinnery Report
- 1988 House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs – Daubney Committee
- 1988 Solicitor General Task Force on Aboriginal Peoples in Federal Corrections
- 1990 The Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women - Creating Choices

APPENDIX B

Programs Descriptions Related to Violence for Women Offenders

Anger and Emotions Management Program

This program is a sub-component of the larger core program, Living Skills. It was originally developed for high-risk male offenders; however, a pilot study for women offenders has been initiated. Based on a cognitive behavioural approach, it concentrates on the management of anger, aggression, and antisocial behaviour (Correctional Service of Canada (2000d). Standard Operating Practice 726: Management of Correctional Programs – Appendix B – Standards for Living Skills Programming, Ottawa: Correctional Service of Canada.).

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy is an empirically supported, systematic and comprehensive psychotherapeutic approach for treating individuals struggling with severe emotion and behavioural dysregulation. Based on cognitive and behavioural principles, DBT was developed to treat individuals who meet criteria for Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) (McDonagh, D., Taylor, K. & Blanchette, K. (2002). “Correctional adaptation of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) for federally sentenced women”, Forum on Corrections Research, 14, 2, 36-39).

Intensive Treatment Program (ITP)

In response to the extent of mental health needs of the Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women (BCCW) population, in May of 1998, CSC requested that a specialized program be implemented. The initial framework for the ITP closely modeled the Violent Offender Program for male federal inmates, however it was amended to include components of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and adopted the concepts of self-empowerment and a women-centered approach in helping women address their unique needs. It focuses on women with a history of aggressive or self destructive acts/offences or high risk women offenders (Irving, J., Taylor, K., & Blanchette, K. (2002). Results of an Evaluation of the Intensive Treatment Program at

Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women Offenders, Ottawa: Correctional Service Canada).

Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR)

The Psychosocial Rehabilitation program targets individuals with severe and persistent mental illness (i.e., schizophrenia, bi-polar illness, cognitive impairments). The goal of psychosocial rehabilitation is to improve the quality of life of these individuals by assisting them to assume responsibility over their lives and to function as actively and independently as possible. Emphasis is placed on client empowerment and client choice (McDonagh, D., Taylor, K. & Blanchette, K. (2002). "Correctional adaptation of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) for federally sentenced women", Forum on Corrections Research, 14, 2, 36-39).

Spirit of a Warrior Program

This is a pilot program specifically designed for Aboriginal women offenders. It uses a cognitive-behavioural approach to target attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours related to violence. More importantly, it incorporates elements of Aboriginal culture through the use of traditional ceremonies and teachings and the principles of individual strength and courage (Native Counselling Services of Alberta. (2001). Spirit of a Warrior, Edmonton: Native Counselling Services of Alberta).

APPENDIX C

Correctional Institutions for Federally Sentenced Women

Institution	Location	Security	Opened	Closed
Edmonton Institution for Women	Edmonton, Alberta	Multi-level	November 1995	N/A
Grand Valley Institution for Women	Kitchener, Ontario	Multi-level	January 1997	N/A
Joliette Institution	Joliette, Quebec	Multi-level	January 1997	N/A
Nova Institution for Women	Truro, Nova Scotia	Multi-level	October 1995	N/A
Okimaw Ochi Healing Lodge	Maple Creek, Saskatchewan	Multi-level	August 1995	N/A
Prison for Women	Kingston, Ontario	Multi-level	January 1934	July 2000
Regional Psychiatric Centre *	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	Multi-level	February 1996	N/A
Regional Reception Centre *	Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, Quebec	Maximum	May 1997	N/A
Saskatchewan Penitentiary *	Prince Albert, Saskatchewan	Maximum	August 1996	March 2003
Springhill Institution *	Springhill, Nova Scotia	Maximum	September 1996	June 2003

* Co-located units in federal male penitentiaries.

APPENDIX D⁶⁵

Incident Definitions

Murder: as defined in section 229 of the Criminal Code.

Assault: a deliberate attack on any person resulting in serious bodily injury. A major assault can be classified as attempted murder when there is clear evidence that the attacker intended to kill the victim.

Inmate Fight: a physical altercation between two or more inmates which results in serious bodily injury where an instigator cannot be clearly identified.

Major Disturbance: an incident that greatly disrupts the daily activities of an institution due to violence or other behaviour and requires the lock-up of the whole or a significant portion of the inmate population. For example, riots resulting in extensive property damage, large groups of inmates refusing to work or refusing to return to their cells.

Captive and Barricade Situations: For example, hostage taking, forcible confinement, forcible confinement for the purpose of sexual assault.

⁶⁵ Correctional Service of Canada. (1998). Interim Instruction: Reporting and Recording of Security Information – Commissioner's Directive 620. Ottawa: Correctional Service of Canada.

APPENDIX E

Research Information Sheet

My name is Amey. I am a Masters student at the University of Ottawa and am completing a Masters thesis on prison violence among Canadian women offenders. Due to the nature of my proposed thesis, I would like the participation of women offenders in federal institutions.

A research proposal was submitted to the Research Branch of the Correctional Service of Canada. Upon its approval, the researcher was provided data on women offenders including their names, FPS (Finger Print Services) numbers, demographics, offence type, sentence length, and criminal history.

This research will examine the nature and extent of violent incidents committed by federally sentenced women incarcerated in Canadian prisons. As part of the research, I am seeking interviews with approximately five women offenders who have committed violent incidents in a federal institution in the last six years. The interview will include questions on the women's involvement in the violent incidents, descriptions of their feelings and behaviours, their perceptions of violence in prison, and their opinions on what causes violent behaviour in this context. In total, the participants will be asked for approximately 1 to 2 hours of their time.

Anonymity will be ensured throughout the research process in several ways. The participants will be given a respondent number that corresponds to their name and FPS number. The name and FPS number of the participant will not be associated with the interview responses. If the participants are quoted, their names will not be used. Any identifiable characteristics such as physical features or age will not be included.

At all times, the confidentiality and privacy of the participant will be respected. Access to the data will be granted to the researcher and academic supervisor, and all data will be stored in a secure location. The research participant is free to withdraw from the project at any time, before or during an interview, refuse to participate and refuse to answer questions. It would be preferred that the interview be taped in order to ensure that the offender's perspective is fully captured, but this is only an option and the participant may decline to have the interview recorded.

As a result of the sensitive nature of the research, and that participants are being asked to reflect on personal experiences, there may be a low level of emotional or psychological harm to the participants. Moreover, they may feel uncomfortable discussing their personal feelings with a complete stranger. The participants may feel reluctant to discuss their involvement in a violent incident, especially if there are pending charges.

The present study offers women offenders the unique opportunity to provide their own perspective on how and why they are violent in the correctional setting. This

information may clarify misconceptions about women and violence and contribute to a greater understanding of the issue. Further, it is hoped that the perspectives of the women will provide insight into some of the factors that provoke or motivate violent behaviour. Women will be given a voice, and more importantly, their voice will be heard separately from their male counterparts. Finally, the information from this study may provide incentive for developing programs in prisons that address women's anger and aggression. This type of education will assist the women in effectively dealing with family relationships and other social relations.

APPENDIX F

Informed Consent Form

Date: _____

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Amey as part of the requirement for the Masters memoir of the Department of Criminology and Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Ottawa. The purpose of the research is to examine the nature and extent of violent incidents in the federal correctional system for federally incarcerated women. The research will also consist of identifying the reasons for women's involvement as perpetrators in violent incidents. This research will be conducted under the supervision of an academic advisor, Myriam Denov of the University of Ottawa.

As a participant in this study, I will be offered the unique opportunity to provide my own perspective on the extent of violence in the correctional setting, and more specifically, explain my experiences with violent behaviour. This information may clarify misconceptions about women and violence. In addition, this research will help to address numerous concerns about security and risk, as well as, aid in the development of prevention and intervention strategies.

My participation will consist of one interview with the student researcher, which will take approximately one hour to complete. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, before or during an interview, refuse to participate and refuse to answer questions. It would be preferred that the interview be taped in order to ensure that my perspective is fully captured, but this is only an option and I may decline to have the interview recorded. If I decline to have the interview audio-taped, the interview will be documented through careful note-taking.

I understand that the information contained in the interviews is personal and sensitive in nature. As a result, I may experience emotional or psychological discomfort when answering some questions. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these occurrences.

I understand that the contents of the interview will be used for research purposes only. I also understand that the student researcher and academic supervisor will have access to the interview responses. I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I share will remain strictly confidential. Anonymity will be assured in the following manner: the participant will be given a respondent number which will correspond with the participant's full name and FPS number. At no time shall my name be used in relation to the information provided, or in any other way that would reveal my identity.

I understand that the interviews and other data collected will be kept in a secure manner. They will be locked in a filing cabinet with access only granted to the researcher. The information will be conserved at the researcher's private home for no longer than five years once the interviews are completed.

Any information about my rights as a research participant may be addressed to Catherine Lesage, Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, 30 Steward Street, Room 301, (613) 562-5387 or clesage@uottawa.ca. If I have any questions about the conduct of the research project, I may contact the Research Branch of the Correctional Service of Canada at (613) 996-5222 or reslib@magi.com.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep.

Please check one only:

- ☐ I consent to have the interview audio-taped.
- ☐ I do not consent to have the interview audio-taped.

Signature of the participant: _____

Signature of the researcher: _____

APPENDIX G

A Descriptive Analysis of Violent Incidents in the Canadian Federal Correctional System

INMATE INTERVIEW

Date: _____

Time: _____

Respondent Number: _____

Before we begin the interview, I would like to briefly explain why I am interested in this research. With the opening of the five regional facilities, there has been some discussion about the ability of these environments to help ease violence and disruption among the women offender population. At this time, I would like to offer you the opportunity to express your opinion about prison violence in general, and your personal experiences with violent incidents. I realize that some of these questions may be difficult to answer, but I feel that your participation in this interview will allow your voice to be heard by individuals inside and outside the institution. The interview is divided into four parts: your institutional experience with staff and inmates, your perceptions of violence in prison, your individual experiences with violent incidents, and the influence of the environment on your behaviour. Before we start, do you have any questions you would like me to answer?

PART A: Institutional Experience with Staff and Inmates

I would like to begin the interview by asking you a few questions about your experiences with staff and inmates.

1. In general terms, please describe your current relationship with the other inmates (i.e., positive or negative interactions)?
2. In general terms, please describe your current relationship with staff (i.e., positive or negative interactions)?

PART B: Perceptions of Violence in the Prison Context

In the next series of questions, I would like to ask you about your perception of prison violence in general and the role of others in violent incidents.

3. In your opinion, to what extent and degree do inmates engage in violent behaviour in this specific institution (i.e., frequency, minor or serious, types of behaviour, etc.)?

4. In your opinion, why do you think violence occurs in prison (i.e., between inmates and inmates, between inmates and staff members)?
5. In what ways, do you believe the relationships between staff and inmates affect your own use of violence in the institution (i.e., inmate and staff attitudes and/or behaviour)?
6. How does the violence affect you (i.e., as a person, daily routine, program activities, your relationship with others)?
7. What purpose does violence serve for you (i.e., demands are met by staff, negative feelings disappear, a feeling of control, relieves boredom, etc.)?
8. Do you believe your use of violence influences others to act violently?
9. Is violence more effective as a group or individual effort? Does this effectiveness, or lack of, impact your decision to engage in violence with others?

PART C: Individual Experience with Violent Incidents

In this section, I would like to discuss a specific incident in detail, and your personal experiences before, during, and after the incident occurred.

10. In the last year, approximately how many violent incidents have you been involved in (as a perpetrator and as a victim)?
11. In order (from the most recent to the least recent), what were the incidents?
12. In those incidents where your role has been a perpetrator, has there ever been a co-perpetrator involved? If yes, how did their involvement affect the incident (i.e., choosing a victim, severity of harm, duration of incident, the final result, etc.)?
13. Take a moment to think back to the most recent violent incident you have been involved in. Please describe that particular incident in detail (i.e., type of incident, time of day, other instigators, staff involvement, victims, etc.).
14. Can you describe the moments (hours, minutes) leading up to the incident (i.e., what was different about that day, negative thoughts or feelings)?
15. Can you describe your actions and behaviours during this incident (i.e., hitting, shoving, swearing, grabbing, kicking, punching, stabbing, etc.)?
16. As you think about this particular incident, can you describe your thoughts and feelings at the time of the incident (i.e., anger, sad, frustrated, irritated, annoyed, depressed, etc.)?

17. After the incident, how did you feel about what had happened (i.e., did you regret it, did you feel relieved, were you upset or angry, did you feel in control, etc.)?
18. Looking back on what happened, is there anything that could have prevented the incident from occurring (i.e., talking to a counsellor, taking a program, getting some exercise, seeing family or friends, different staff reactions, etc.)?

PART D: Influence of the Environment on Behaviour

In the final part of this interview, I would like to inquire about how the institutional environment affects and/or influences violent behaviour.

19. In your opinion, does the prison environment influence your decision to act violently towards others? If yes, what are some of the factors that influence this decision? These factors may include something about the daily routine of prison, the physical layout of the unit, staff or inmate attitudes, the lack of privacy, the presence of drugs or alcohol, institutional rules or policy, and so on.
20. From your experience, do you think there has been an increase in prison violence over the years (i.e., the past five years)? If yes, why do you think there has been an increase?
21. Have you been incarcerated at different institutions throughout your current sentence? If yes, which ones? How did these environments differ in regards to the extent and seriousness of violence perpetuated by women offenders (i.e., Prison for Women, provincial institutions, co-located units)?

If you have been incarcerated in one of the five regional facilities, I would like to ask you one more question.

22. In what ways does the environment in the regional facilities decrease, increase, or stabilize levels of violence?

Do you have anything you would like to add?

Thank you for your valuable opinion and personal time.

APPENDIX H

Relevant Correctional Policies

Commissioner's Directive 041: Incident Reports

Commissioner's Directive 566: Prevention of Security Incidents

Commissioner's Directive 567: Management of Security Incidents

Commissioner's Directive 568-1: Recording and Reporting of Security Incidents

Commissioner's Directive 580: Discipline of Inmates

Commissioner's Directive 620: Reporting and Recording of Security Information