Project Report

Reframing the Needs of Women in Prison: A Relational and Diversity Perspective

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Stone Center

The Stone Center

Women in Prison Project

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THE STONE CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

The Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies at Wellesley College is dedicated to the prevention of psychological problems, the enhancement of psychological well-being, and the search for a more comprehensive understanding of human development. Particular attention is paid to the experiences of women, children, and families across culturally diverse populations. The mission is carried out through development of theory, research, education, consultation, action programs, and counseling in collaboration with the Wellesley College Community and other institutions and individuals.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: THE WOMEN IN PRISON PROJECT

The Women in Prison project of the Stone Center was a fifteen month project funded by the Massachusetts Committee on Criminal Justice to initiate the development of an integrated relational and diversity approach to the care and treatment of women in prison and after release. The project consisted of four phases: three conferences were held at Wellesley College to introduce the work of the Stone Center to the Department of Correction administration and staff and to post-release service providers; a series of focus groups and interviews with women in prison to assess their developmental histories, their relational profiles and their perceptions of their present and future needs; interviews with staff for developing a training framework based on relational and diversity theory; and, piloting and evaluating the training framework in a series of educational process groups with Department of Correction staff and incarcerated women. The main findings were:

> 1) the needs of women as identified by Department of correction staff and post release care providers fall into two main categories: economic self-sufficiency (e.g.. increase their educational and job skills), and psychosocial needs (e.g.. substance abuse treatment and promotion of emotional well-being.)

> 2) the needs of women as identified by themselves, vary according to race and ethnicity in the areas of substance abuse, impact of early trauma/migration history and housing; most women, regardless of their race/ethnicity reported the need for furthering their education and arrived in prison with multiple trauma histories (e.g. loss of parents in childhood, childhood

abuse, leaving home under the age of seventeen, and repeated verbal, sexual and physical abuse as adults.)

3) most of these women have minor children who will return to their custody after release; the younger the child , the less likelihood that they visit on a regular basis; different visiting patterns are seeing as a function of ethnicity and race for visitors of all ages.

4) a training framework integrating relational and diversity approaches was successfully developed and pilot tested with staff and incarcerated women.

5) based on these findings recommendations are presented that include the development of an integrated treatment model for incarcerated women that reflects relational and diversity frameworks; ongoing training program for staff, which operationalizes these frameworks into their daily staff-to-staff and staff-to-inmate contacts; and, the creation of linkages to agencies and services for women being released.

I. OVERVIEW

This was a fifteen month pilot project, funded by the Massachusetts Committee on Criminal Justice to initiate the development of an integrated relational and diversity approach to the care and treatment of women in prison and after release. The pilot project consisted of four phases: (I) Three conferences held at Wellesley college to introduce the work of the Stone Center and the Project to the Department of Correction administration and staff and to post-release service providers; (II) A needs assessment which consisted of a series of focus groups and interviews with women in prison to assess their developmental histories, their relational profiles and their perceptions of their present and future needs; (III) Interviews with staff in preparation for development of a training framework designed to strengthen women's development based on relational and diversity theory; and (IV) Development, piloting and evaluating of the training framework with Department of Correction administration, staff, and incarcerated women.

Background

Several reasons underlie this project which is designed to address the particular needs of women in prison. One of the main reasons is the increase in number of female offenders which has more than doubled in the space of eight years. The 1993 report of the Massachusetts Special House Committee to investigate the conditions and treatment of females in the criminal justice system states:

> "While women as a group still make up a small percentage of the overall inmate population (5.7%), their increasing numbers call attention to the need to determine and address the differing needs of women inmates in a system which has historically addressed the punishment and reform of male offenders" (House of Representatives, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, January, 1993).

It is clear that the dramatic increase in the female incarcerated population merits special attention. However, this change is also accompanied by a shift in demographic composition. Although, the number of women in state and federal prisons has increased across all ethnic groups, the increase in the African American and Hispanic populations has been

higher.   This diversity has tremendous implications for understanding the needs of these women and appropriateness of existing services.

The third reason for concentrating on women is that within the inmate population, female offenders present a different profile than their male counterparts. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1991), there is a greater proportion of women who are serving time for non-violent offenses (i.e. property, drug and public offenses) as opposed to violent crimes. Thus, the nature of their criminal behavior is different than their male counterparts. Moreover, not only are the reasons for incarceration different but women's behavioral profile within the institutions is also distinct (Turnbo, 1992).   The female inmates present a distinct pattern of characteristics that can have a profound impact on their behavior within a correctional facility.

Finally, there is a body of knowledge generated primarily in the last thirty years that points out the existence of gender differences on behavioral, cognitive, moral, and psychological characteristics.   The application of all this knowledge on how women learn, operate, change their behaviors, and grow should be used to address what Rafter (1992) refers to as the need for a new model for treatment of women in prison, a model that takes gender differences into account.

The Project Team

The Stone Center Women in Prison Project team was a diverse group by design.   The project team of staff, consultants, research assistants, and project assistants was multi-cultural, multi-racial, and bilingual including women who were African American, Caucasian, Latina, Korean, and Chinese.   The team included clinical, developmental, and educational psychologists, and a psychiatrist, and women with previous experience working with women in prison.   In addition to diversity of academic fields, professional experience, competencies, race and ethnicity, the age distribution of team members was between twenty to over age sixty.   Diversity on the team was also represented by differing abilities, sexual preference, educational background, and parenting experience.   The expectation was that these diverse experiences would help shape our perceptions in the work on this project and help us to better understand the diverse needs and experiences of

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women in prison and the work we have done on the Project. The Stone Center Women in Prison Project Team consisted of the following individuals:

CYNTHIA GARCIA COLL, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Education, Psychology and Pediatrics, Brown University, is currently co-principal investigator of several NICHD grants including one entitled Normative Development Among Puerto Rican Adolescents and co-director of the Stone Center Women In Prison Project. She is a consultant for several foundations, including the Better Homes Foundation for a population based study on homelessness, and the MacArthur Foundation. She is also co-editor of The Psychosocial Development of Puerto Rican Women, and Puerto Rican Women and Children: Issues in Health, Growth and Development.

JEAN BAKER MILLER, M.D., is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Boston University School of Medicine, a Lecturer at Harvard Medical School, and Director of Education at the Stone Center, Wellesley College, and oversees the implementation of relational theory and training with The Stone Center Women in Prison Project. She is author of many publications including Toward a New Psychology of Women, and co-author of Women's Growth in Connection.

CATHERINE DOOLEY, M.S., Consultant to The Stone Center Women in Prison Project, is a clinical psychologist. Formerly Clinical Supervisor - Cognitive Behavior Therapy Internship program, McLean Hospital and Harvard Medical School, and former Co-Director of Inpatient Research and Clinical Program for Eating Disorders, Cognitive Therapy Unit, McLean Hospital, she has served on the Juvenile Probation Committee, Barnstable (MA) District Court, and has worked as a counselor with juvenile offenders.

KATHLEEN M. DUFF, Ed.M., Co-Director of the Stone Center Women in Prison Project, received her Ed.M. in the area of human development, psychology, and education from Harvard University. She has research and applied experience in the psychological development of women, children and families with a particular interest in relational growth and psychological well being. A former Administrative Officer at Harvard University, she has managed national and international research and development projects, and was affiliated with The Bunting Institute, Radcliffe College. Recent work includes "A Relational Perspective: Meeting the Needs of Female Juvenile Offenders in the 21st Century".

JACQUELINE P. FIELDS, Ph.D., Consultant to The Stone Center Women in Prison Project, is a Senior Research Associate at the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women focusing on educational and employment issues for

women and girls with a particular focus on the concerns of women and girls of color. She has served as consultant to the U.S. Department of Labor, co-directed the University of Massachusetts Medical Center Gender Equity Study, and was research director of the national Girl Scouts racial and ethnic diversity research project. Additionally, she has directed projects at the YWCA of the USA in New York City investigating staff development and upward mobility. Her work also includes the review and evaluation of educational equity products produced by the U.S. Department of Education, as well as designing strategies and methodologies to enhance employment opportunities for women and minorities in corporate settings at Digital Equipment Corporation. Dr. Fields received her Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.

YVONNE JENKINS, Ph.D., Clinical consultant on diversity and multicultural training to the Women in Prison Project is a Psychologist at the Harvard University Health Services. She is also in private practice in Brookline, Massachusetts and affiliated with The Center for Multicultural Training in Psychology, Boston. She is co-author of Diversity in Psychotherapy: The Politics of Race, Gender, and Ethnicity, editor of Case Studies In Diversity: Implications For College Mental Health, and co-author of Community Health Psychology: Empowerment For Communities of Color.

JULIA E. PEREZ, M.A., Consultant to The Stone Center Women in prison Project on the needs of incarcerated women, is coordinator of Substance Abuse Education for the Cambridge School Department, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and founder of the SISTERS Project, an after school violence and substance abuse prevention program for girls at Longfellow School, Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is also former program director of the Women's Health and Learning Center at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution -- Framingham.

MARGARET POTTER, B.A., Senior Research and Project Assistant for The Women in Prison Project, with extensive research experience in gathering data on the psychological development of infants, and the needs of women and children living in welfare hotels.

JANET SURREY, Ph.D., Clinical consultant to The Women in Prison Project on relational theory is former Director of Psychological Services, Adult Outpatient Department, McLean Hospital, Belmont, Massachusetts. She is currently a Visiting Scholar at the Stone Center, Wellesley College, Instructor in Psychology, Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, and on the adjunct faculty at the Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is co-author of Women's Growth in Connection.

ERIKA STEWART, Ed.M., Senior Research and Project Assistant for The Women in Prison Project, is a substance abuse counselor with experience in leading therapeutic groups for women with histories of abuse and for Latina women incarcerated within the Massachusetts Department of Correction facilities. She received her Ed.M from Harvard University.

SANDRA YARNE, Ph.D., Consultant on training to The Women in Prison Project at the Stone Center, Wellesley College, is a clinical psychologist in private practice and specializes in services to women and girls at the Human Resource Institute in Lawrence and Haverhill, Massachusetts.

Project and Research Assistants: **SALLY COOMBS,** Wellesley College '96, **JOEY M. FOX,** Wellesley College '96, **MOLLY GUGGENHEIM,** Wellesley College, '95, **BETSY MATHEWS,** Wellesley College, '95, **ELIZABETH PAU,** Wellesley College, '96 and **HEIDIE A. VAZQUEZ GARCIA,** Brown University '93.

The Report

As previously stated, the project consisted of four phases to initiate the development of an integrated relational and diversity approach to the care and treatment of women in prison and after release. The four phases were designed to build upon each other, in order to generate further documentation of these women's needs and contribute to the design and piloting of a training framework that would be applicable to both staff working with these women as the women themselves. The rest of this report will provide an overview of the following: the conferences, the needs assessment, and the training framework. Further details are provided in the following documents available from the Stone Center : (1) Duff, K.M., Garcia Coll, C.T., Miller, J.B. and Potter, M. *Meeting the needs of women in prison: Diversity and Relationships.* The 1994 Conferences. The Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies, Wellesley College. (2) Yarney, S., Jenkins, Y., and Dooley, C . *Relational and Diversity Training: Session Summaries.* The Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies, Wellesley College.

Special recognition is extended to Kathleen Duff for her efforts in creating the initial draft of this report.

II. THE CONFERENCES

The Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies and the Massachusetts Committee for Criminal Justice held three conferences in the Spring of 1994 at Wellesley College. The goals of the Conferences were:

> 1) to introduce relational theory as developed by The Stone Center clinical theory group and its possible application to address the unique needs of the growing population of women in prison;
>
> 2) to discuss the necessity and centrality of a diversity approach in the treatment and care of women in prison, given the increasing number of women of color within this population;
>
> 3) to identify and discuss the needs of women in prison as perceived by the three conference participant groups: policy makers and senior administrators within the Massachusetts Department of Correction, line staff within the prison system, and community care and treatment providers who work with women after release.

Each conference consisted of a series of presentations by the project staff and other service providers, and small group discussions designed to identify the needs of women in prison and those released from prison. Cynthia Garcia Coll reported on the significance of undertaking such a project given that (1) the incarcerated female population has doubled nationally, and increased 500% in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the last decade; and (2) the increased research and knowledge of gender difference in behavioral, cognitive, moral and emotional development has provided new frameworks for understanding women's development and must be incorporated into prevention programs for women at social risk. Jean Baker Miller provided the theoretical framework for growth-enhancing connections in healthy relationships and the impact of disconnection and violation in

relationships. Yvonne Jenkins encouraged an understanding of common sources of human diversity, of the sociopolitical sources which shape perception, and a self-understanding of how one embraces diversity. Janet Surrey described the problem of substance abuse and addiction from a relational perspective as "a constriction of connection" and recovery as an "expansion of connection". Norma Finkelstein summarized how to implement, through a relational perspective, a substance abuse treatment program for women. Jacqueline Fields presented some preliminary findings from The Stone Center pilot study on the needs of women in prison which was underway during the June 15 Conference for community care providers. Sandra Yarne summarized the needs of women in prison as presented in the participant discussion groups at each Conference. Next, the panelists' discussion from the Conference for community care providers summarized the needs of women recently released from prison, from a first hand perspective.

The Stone Center Conferences on Women in Prison were held on March 4, 1994 for the Department of Correction policy makers and administrators; on March 25, 1994 for line staff working with women in prison at the Massachusetts Department of Correction facilities; and on June 15, 1994 for community care and treatment providers. Selected participants from the Department of Correction were invited and a variety of Department of Correction staff from different agencies attended. Community care providers were identified through networking with the Massachusetts Department of Correction classification staff, the Massachusetts Committee on Criminal Justice, and other agencies and community organizations which provide services throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for women recently released from prison.

The March 4 and March 25 Conferences provided an unprecedented opportunity for The Stone Center, The Massachusetts Committee on Criminal Justice, and the Massachusetts Department of Correction. These Conferences were the first time that staff from most areas within the Department of Correction (i.e., security, treatment services, classification, training, mental health services), from most levels (i.e., commissioner, associate commissioners, senior administrators, middle managers, superintendents, and line staff) and from two women's facilities, MCI-

Lancaster and MCI-Framingham, convened to discuss the needs of women in prison and within the context of a relational and diversity framework.

Participants in the June 15 Conference for community care providers represented a diverse group of women and men who work with women recently released from prison: staff members from outreach programs, shelters, half-way houses, clergy, residential and day programs for substance abuse treatment and health centers, and parole officers. This Conference represented the first time that this diverse group of community agencies and individuals working with women released from prison formally convened to address diversity and the needs of released women through a relational framework, although several of the conference participants were familiar with The Stone Center and used relational theory.

THE NEEDS OF WOMEN IN PRISON

The conference participants' discussion and identification of the needs of women in prison and women who have been released were captured through feedback on conference questionnaires, participant group discussions and evaluation forms (see Tables 1 and 2).

TABLE 1

"What do you think are the three most important needs of women in prison to be considered in developing programming and treatment?

Needs	DOC Administration Respondents	DOC Line Staff Respondents	Community Care Providers Respondents
Education Services / Job Skills	42%	64%	22%
Meaningful Connection	36%	23%	33%
Drug / Alcohol Treatment	26%	38%	28%
Mental Health Services	--	34%	--
Self Esteem	--	--	39%
Safety	--	--	28%

In response to the above question all three groups of conference participants identified similar needs of women in prison. Although they ordered these differently, all three groups of conference participants responded with:

(a) educational services/job skills

(b) meaningful connections (with family friends and community)

(c) drug/alcohol treatment.

Education and job skills were rated first when all three conference groups were combined. This concurs with research findings that participation in educational programs reduces recidivism.[1] The line staff identified the need for mental health services and the community care providers added the important need to encourage self-esteem and the need for physical and emotional safety.

TABLE 2

"What do you think are the three most important needs of women recently released from prison?"
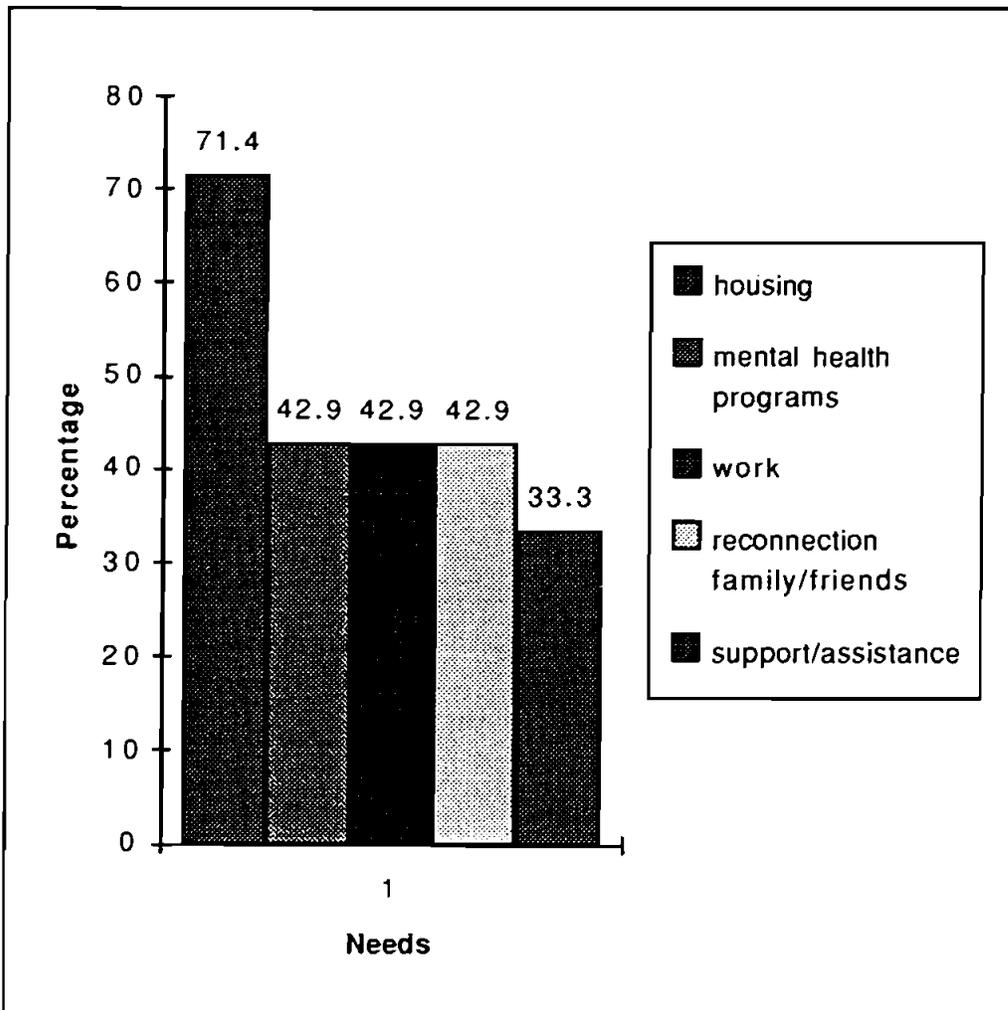
[1]Piel, Anne Morrison. (1994). Learning while doing time. *Working Paper Series*, #H-94-4, Malcolm Weiner Center for Social Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

When women get released from prison, different, but related needs are identified across all conference participants. The number one need is housing: this need was also voiced by the women themselves during focus groups. Next, similar percentages of participants identified mental health services, employment and reconnection with family/friends as the next set of needs . Finally support and assistance in accessing services and responding to these needs was identified.

In general, two sets of needs were identified by conference participants for women in/ released from prison:

> • one set of needs includes education, job skills and
> housing; essentially these needs address the economic
> conditions of these women's lives and their possible role in
> their incarceration and recidivism.
>
> • the second set of questions relate to psychosocial needs:
> substance abuse treatment services are critical as well as the
> promotion of self-esteem, emotional well-being, and
> meaningful connection with family, friends, and community.

The two sets of needs are inter-related: women at risk, have great difficulty accessing new job skills, maintaining jobs, a home, economic stability, substance-free lives, and crime-free lifestyles without integrated emotional support and an understanding of the cultural and relational contexts in which they grow, develop, and change. The Stone Center views the latter set of needs, the psychosocial needs, as *primary* for women in prison and women who are released.[2] The need for integrated services that address the two distinct, but interrelated, set of needs are necessary to reduce recidivism and the intergenerational transmission of criminal activity, since the majority of these women have children (80%) and are heads of households.

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[2] For more information on the content and findings of the conferences see Duff, K.M., Garcia Coll, C.T., Miller, J.B. and Potter.M. *Meeting the needs of women in prison: Diversity and*

III. THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the needs assessment was foremost to understand the needs of women in prison as determined by the voices and words of the women themselves. Although there is a body of literature that addresses the needs of women in prison, our purpose was to use relational and diversity approaches to understand what was not being heard from imprisoned women. Thus, our work was centered on listening with empathy to imprisoned women as they spoke in the focus groups, their responses to questionnaires, and their voices throughout the educational process group.

The role of empathic listening is central to the work of The Stone Center clinical theory group, and crucial to understanding the needs of women in prison. Demographic data gathered in questionnaires are helpful in building an overall profile which places these women's voices in a certain context, but the power of understanding behavior and needs can be best understood through listening to each women's construction of her world and her problems in maintaining an empathetic dialog with others. We were very invested in listening and making an emotional connection with these women through the listening, even if for a short period of time, and thus, maintaining a mutual understanding that this special period of connection would come to an end. Without this dialogue we could not have captured their experienced traumatic relationships and disconnections, including imprisonment. Without this connection, we predicted that most likely, the women would have chosen not to participate because of the very nature of imprisonment, or if they did speak, they may have done so inauthentically, to outsiders who were coming to, in their words, "take information". Although imprisonment is a powerfully disconnecting experience, the women we met in the focus groups and in the educational process group had amazing resiliency and psychological strengths and connected to all of us in very profound ways.

Those who work with women in prison often say words to the effect that the inmates will talk because they are required to tell their story to everyone: their lawyers, judges, juries, social workers, intake, in classification

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after being imprisoned, to parole, and all over again, on appeal, if rearrested, etc. Once a woman is incarcerated, she no longer owns her life story, it is said. What we came to recognize was how an imprisoned woman can become emotionally disconnected from her life story under such circumstances. The other difficulty presented to us was this: many women in prison, because of loneliness are even more vulnerable in that they will share more than they expected or wanted to at the time. Much discussion with the imprisoned women prior to our beginning the focus groups (described below) was a dialog initiated by them on why they should bother to talk with us. The purpose of the focus groups, from the perspective of The Stone Center group, was not to convince the women that they should talk with us, but to allow us to listen to them. This shift was pivotal to their participation.

A key concern on the part of the incarcerated women was that we were, as one prisoner said, "just another bunch of researchers" and that, as another said, "nothing will happen with the information" they shared with us, as if the only part of the experience they would have after we left was having "given" something to us with "nothing in return." We validated the resistance and faced other kinds of resistance during the focus groups, but found this to be an important process with the women, which only strengthened the focus group process and furthered inmates' willingness to participate. Despite their deep-seated and valid concerns, 69% of the population voluntarily signed up to participate in the focus groups. Once the focus groups were underway, several participants in several groups, reported that the experience was "different", "more real", than what they expected, and that the careful empathetic listening, felt less like "taking information, " from them because the connection, however temporally short, had the elements of what Jean Baker Miller describes in healthy connections -- a sense of well-being , ability to take action, to participate in the group relationship, an increased knowledge of oneself and others; increased sense of self-worth and a desire for more connection (Miller, 1986). As focus group leaders, we engaged these elements of healthy connection while conducting the focus group interviews. The result was more authentic focus group dialog, authentic responses to the questions, and to the information asked on the questionnaires.

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to gather data on women in prison at the project site (a medium and pre-release security prison located in Lancaster, Massachusetts) which held two separate women's units in a prison which housed both men and women in segregated units. During the period of data collection, 82 women were held at the facility. Women prisoners were informed about the Project and opportunity for participation through two mandatory meetings, one was held at each of the two cottages for all women at the facility. The purpose of the meetings was to introduce the Project to the inmates, explain the project timetable, answer questions, and ask for voluntary sign-up for the focus groups.

All participants were given a Project Description in English or Spanish and were requested to sign an informed consent form in either English or Spanish. A copy of each participant's signed consent form was returned to each participant. Participants in the focus groups were given a certificate of completion and were thanked for their contribution to the project through a letter, both of which were presented at a large meeting with all focus group leaders and all the women who participated and who were still in custody at MCI- Lancaster.

At the beginning of all data collection, during the focus groups, the gathering of data through the questionnaires, and or during site visits related to data collection, the participants were informed prior to giving any responses that they could voluntarily withdraw from the needs assessment. In addition, participants were advised that if they felt distressed from their participation, the questions, or their responses, we would notify a correctional officer as soon as possible. No such follow-up was required, to our knowledge, when we checked out with participants after each meeting and on the site at a later time.

Focus groups

The incarcerated women voluntarily signed up. Fifty four women voluntarily participated, 69% of the total number of women incarcerated. Some women did not complete the focus groups because of change in inmate status, i.e., return to higher custody, or release. Most of the eleven focus

groups were led by bi-cultural, bi-racial teams of two leaders. One group was entirely in Spanish; some groups were bi-lingual English/Spanish. All but two groups were tape recorded with permission. The group discussions were transcribed. Groups led in Spanish were transcribed in Spanish, and then the Spanish transcription was translated into English.

Participants were asked eight questions:

- Why do you think women go to prison?
- What do you think are the two most important needs of women in prison?
- How have you changed since you have been here?
- What does a woman need in order to make it on the outside and to stay out?
- What are your feelings about being released?
- Think about one person who is closest to you. Please tell us who this person (friend or relative) is and what it is you like about the relationship?
- Think about the person who has had the greatest effect on you before you came to prison. Who was that person -- friend or relative?
- What would you like your relationships to be like?

These questions were selected based on their face validity tested out during the conferences and our theoretical framework that suggest the importance of relationships in women's lives.

Questionnaires

Four instruments (demographic, needs and strengths, mutuality, and relational diagram) were also administered in English and Spanish at the end of the last focus group. The questionnaires were translated into Spanish, and then back-translated into English to assure that meaning of the questions was the same similar in both languages and was culturally accurate in both colloquial and/or formal Spanish for the Latina women. Instructions for completing the questionnaires were given by group leaders in English, and in Spanish for those participants who requested and for those who were in the Spanish speaking focus group.

Participants completed the following questionnaires:

- Demographic with Open-ended Questions   (n=54)
- Relational Diagram   (n=54)
- Needs/Strength Statement   (n=49)
- Mutuality Scale   (n=50)

Follow-up

Three months after the focus groups concluded, a report-back meeting was held in August 1994, at the prison for any focus group participants who were interested in the overall responses to the questions in the focus groups. The three months lapse reflects the time consuming task of transcribing and analyzing the qualitative data generated in the focus groups. Inmates were notified of the meeting through letters placed in their mailboxes and a week later a written reminder of the meeting was given to each participant still at the prison.

Results

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

ETHNICITY and RACE

Total (n= 54); by Race (n=51)

Anglo-European	50%
African American	22.2%
Latina	22.2%
Did not respond	5.6%

The ethnic and racial demographic profile is similar to the demographics of women in state and federal prisons.[3] Three of the fifty-four participants chose not to respond to the open-ended question on race and ethnic identity. Responses were grouped into three main categories: (1) Hispanic/Latino - any women who described herself as Latina, Hispanic, Spanish or Puerto Rican, alone or in combination with any other race/ethnicity except for "black" or "African-American"; (2) African-American - any woman who described herself as African-American or black, alone or in combination with any other race/ethnicity except for those words which would include "Hispanic/Latina"; (3) Anglo American - Any woman who described herself as Caucasian, white, or of European descent such as "German" or "Irish", and did not describe herself as either African American or Hispanic/Latina was included in this category; (4) Other - any one who did not fit the three above categories, however, in this population/data set , all subjects who responded to the questions fit the three previous categories.

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[3] Massachusetts Department of Correction, 1992; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Total (n = 54); By Race (n = 51)

Born in US		Anglo-European	African American	Latina
Yes	81%	100%	100%	17%
No	19%	0	0	83%

Of all three groups, *only the Latina population had a significant number of women who were not born in the United States.* Of the Latina women, 83% immigrated to the United States which is a significant difference (p<.001) in profile between racial groups. The need for treatment and services for this group must attend to the complex needs arising from immigration and acculturation.

AGE

Total (n = 54); By Race (n=51)

Years	Anglo-European	African American	Latina
21-30	25.9%	41.7%	25.0%
31-40	51.9%	25.0%	41.7%
over 41	22.2%	33.3%	33.3%

Of the participants, *over half are between 31-40 years of age,* well above the national averages for incarcerated women which are predominantly in the 19-29 age bracket.[4] This might reflect the unique population characteristics, since a large percentage of these women had been previously at Framingham, serving there a large proportion of their sentences.

It should be noted that *a higher number of African American women (42%), compared to Anglo-European (26%) and Latina (25%) are in the 21-30 age group;* more young African American women than Anglo or Latina are

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[4] Massachusetts Department of Correction, 1994; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992.

in this minimum security group. More Anglo (52%) and Latina (47%) than African American (25%) are in the 31-40 age group.

One third of all the women in the project study are over 40, with needs specific to aging. There is no significant difference in terms of ethnicity and race across the three groups of women over age 40. In terms of what they were sentenced for: 58% of violent offenders are 21-40, and 42% over 41; 24% of drug offenders are 21-30, 42% are 31-40, and 34% are over 41. Seventy six percent of drug offenders are over age 31.

EDUCATION

Total (n=54); by Race (n=51)

Highest grade	Total	Anglo-European	African American	Latina
6 grade or less	3.8%	0	8.3%	8.3%
Junior High or less	13%	14.8%	0	25%
High School or less	42.6%	40.7%	50%	33.3%
Some College	39%	40.7%	41.7%	33.3%
Some Grad/Prof. School	1.9%	3.7%	0	0

It is striking that 39% of the women have some college education and that this does not vary significantly across race/ethnicity, although fewer Latina women (33%), compared to Anglo (41%) and African American (42%), have some college education. Given that 83% of the Latina women report immigrating to the U.S., access to college courses in their primary language may be a factor in the 10% difference. Some college education is correlated with age, i.e., it is more likely that those in the 31-40 age group than the 19-30 or 41 and older age groups (p<.01).

A higher number of African American women (50%) in this minimum security population, compared to Anglo (40%) and Latina (33%), have some high school education. The same percentage of African-American and Latina dropped out of elementary school (8.3%); 35% of Latinas and 14.8% of Anglos dropped out of senior high school and 0% of African-American dropped out of that level. Over 92% of African-American women had education levels at high school or above, compared to 86% of Anglos and 66% of Latinas.

Education level was correlated with marital status and also with plans for release. If married, then they were less likely to have some college

education (p<.01). Of those who have some college education, 75% do not have release plans. Of those who have release plans, 71.7% did not have some college education; 94.3% of the women who do not have college degrees or some college education, have plans for release. Eighty one percent of those who reported they will live with someone on release also reported not having some college education.

We have to remember that this data is based on self-report, and might be limited in terms of its accuracy. In addition, an important question, which was not asked of the participants, is where college education was obtained and when -- prior to, or during incarceration.

DESIRE TO FURTHER EDUCATION

	Anglo-European	African American	Latina
Yes	81.5%	100%	100%

When asked if they would like to further their education, *81.5% of the Anglo- European women, and all of the African American women and Latina women responded "yes"*. A strong motivation for furthering their education was expressed by most women, specially during incarceration,

Total (see last column)

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo-European	African American	Latina	(n =) By Race
First time incarcer-ated	76%	77.8%	75%	75%	n = 51
Length of sentence	x = 251 weeks	203	295	281	n = 29
Did not report sentence	44%				n = 30
Did report sentence	66%				
Less than 3 months	3.3%	7.7%	0	0	
1 yr. or less	3.3%	0%	9.1%	0	
1-2 yrs.	16.3%	23.1%	9.1%	20%	
2-3 yrs.	16.6%	15.4%	27.3%	0	
3-4 yrs.	10%	15.4%	9.1%	0	
4-5 yrs.	26.6%	23.1%	18.2%	60%	
5-7 yrs.	6.7%	7.7%	9.1%	0	
More than 7 years	16.6%	7.7%	18.2%	20%	

The population who chose to participate in our study is unique in that 76% report they are incarcerated for the first time and this does not vary across race and ethnicity. However, length of sentence in weeks indicates that there is a significance difference by race and ethnicity: Anglo (201 weeks), African American (295 weeks) and Latina (281 weeks). *Sentences for African American women averaged eleven months longer than the mean (= 251) and almost two years longer than the Anglo European women; for Latina*

women, their sentences were eight months longer than the mean, and one and a half years longer than the Anglo group.

Although *50% of the women had sentences four years or longer,* an important question which must be addressed is why the length of sentences are so much longer for women of color in this minimum security, prerelease facility. The percentages for those who have sentences of four or more years are Latina (80%), African American (46%), and Anglo European (38%). Of those who have sentences less than two years: Anglo (31%), African American (9%) and Latina (0%).

Given the fact that 76% of inmates are incarcerated for the first time, and this percentage does not vary across race and ethnicity, and that over 57% of population is in for drug/distribution offenses, with mandatory sentences, and only 10% more African-American than Anglos have sentences for violent crimes, one can only conclude from this population, that women of color receive significantly longer sentences than Anglo-European women for similar offenses as first-time offenders.

CATEGORY OF OFFENSE

Total (n=53); By Race (n=51)

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo-European	African American	Latina	(n =) By Race
Offense	n = 53				n = 51
Drugs / Distribute	56.6%	50%	41.7%	83.3%	
Violence / man-slaughter	22.6%	23.1%	33.3%	16.7%	
Theft / Larceny	5.7%	7.7%	8.3%	0	
Arson	3.8%	7.7%	0	0	
Pros-titution	1.9%	3.8%	0	0	
Other	9.4%	7.7%	16.7%	0	

Over fifty percent of the participants were sentenced for possession or distribution of drugs. Percentages for drug distribution varied across race and ethnic groups: Latina (83.3%), African American women (41.7%) and Anglo European (50%). Of those in for violent crimes, including manslaughter, no statistical significance across race and ethnicity exists, but 50% more African American women than Latina women and a third more African American than Anglo European were sentenced for violent crimes. It is interesting to note that in this group of participants, 26.9 % of Anglo Europeans were sentenced for property crimes, compared to 8.3% of African American women and 0% of Latina. Type of crime for which a woman is sentenced within this population seems to vary across racial and ethnic groups.

One of the most significant findings was that 100% of respondents in for violent crimes (including arson) report abuse as a child (p<.01). Of those in for drug related crimes, 53.3% reported childhood abuse and 46.7% none. Thus, some types of crime are associated with childhood abuse histories.

DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

CHILDHOOD RESIDENCY

Total n=54; by Race n= 51

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo-European	African American	Latina
As child lived with someone other than parent	37%	29.6%	58.3%	33.3%
Left home under age 16	47%	40.7%	41.7%	27.3%

Of all the women, *37% reported living with someone other than a parent as a child.* This indicates social and familial relational disruption at an early age, and although we do not know the reasons these women did not live with a parent, it is a significant marker in a developmental history.

Of the African American women, 58% report living with someone other than a parent, an extraordinarily high percentage compared to 33% of the Latina women, and 30% of the Anglo European women who lived with someone other than a parent. These are all percentages much higher than the normative population and indicate early losses and changes in attachment and relationships as children which impacts on later relational experiences.

In addition to the early relational losses, *70% (n = 54) of all the respondents reported leaving home at age 17 or under.* The majority 50%, (n = 54) left home between ages 10 and 16, a time frame which corresponds with the onset of puberty. Studies have shown that leaving home during this

time period is most often attributed to seeking safety from physical, sexual and emotional abuse in the home.[5]

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[5] Gilfus, 1989.

RELATIONAL TRAUMAS: CHILDHOOD ABUSE

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo- European	African American	Latina
CHILD- HOOD ABUSE	68.5% / n = 53			
IN HOME	n = 36			
verbal	53.7%	88.9%	66.7%	71.4%
physical	42.6%	66.7%	44.4%	71.4%
sexual	27.8%	50%	33.3%	28.3%
OUTSIDE OF HOME	n = 36			
verbal	9.3%	22.2%	11.1%	0
physical	7.4%	5.6%	33.3%	0
sexual	5.6%	5.6%	22.2%	0

Childhood abuse is under-reported in most studies and in clinical or school settings.[6] We assume that the percentages given here are lower than actual incidence of reported or remembered abuse.

However, *69% of all respondents reported abuse as a child. Anglo Europeans consistently reported more abuse in the home in all three categories, verbal, sexual and physical compared to the other two groups.* In particular, Anglo Europeans reported almost twice as much sexual abuse (50%) compared with the Latina group (28%). The African American women reported less verbal (68%) and physical abuse (44%) than the Anglo Europeans and the Latinas, but sexual abuse (33%) was only slightly higher than for the Latinas.

It is important to note that the *Latina women reported no verbal, physical or sexual abuse as children outside the home, while 5.6% Anglo European and 33% of African American women reported physical abuse outside the home as children.* Home was a less safe place for all three groups

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[6] Gilfus, 1989.

of women in terms of childhood abuse, and the world outside the home was dangerous for the African-American women as when they were girls.

RELATIONAL TRAUMA: ABUSED AS AN ADULT

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo- European	African American	Latina
ADULT ABUSE	70.4% / n = 53			
IN HOME	n = 38			
verbal	44.4%	68.2%	42.9%	57.1%
physical	42%	72.7%	28.6%	42.9%
sexual	13%	18.2%	14.3%	14.3%
rape	11.1%	13.6%	14.3%	14.3%
OUTSIDE OF HOME	n = 38			
verbal	20.4%	27.3%	42.9%	14.3%
physical	22.2%	27.3%	42.9%	28.6%
sexual	9.3%	18.2%	0%	14.3%
rape	22.2%	31.8%	57.1%	14.3%

Over 70% report abuse as adults. Anglo European women report more abuse inside the home overall and the highest percentages of physical abuse in the home (73%) compared to Latina women (43%) and African American women (29%). Sexual abuse and rape are reported with the same frequency across all three groups. Of the women who report abuse as an adult, 78% report abuse as children (p<.05), thus, if abused as a child they are more likely to be abused as an adult.

Overall, rape is twice as likely to occur outside of the home (22%) compared with inside the home (11%). Of the African American, 57% women report rape outside the home compare to 14.3% in the home. For Anglo women, rape outside the home is 32% compared with 14% in the home. It is interesting to note that the Latina women report rape inside and outside the home to occur equally frequently.

What we can conclude from this data, which was also validated in the educational process group with women prisoners, is that the *women who participated in this project arrived in prison with multiple trauma histories, loss of parents in childhood (38%), childhood abuse (69%), leaving home under age 17 (70%), and repeated verbal, sexual, and physical abuse as adults (70%), both in and out of the home.*

SUBSTANCE ABUSE HISTORY

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo-European	African American	Latina
Substance Abuse	n = 53			

GENERAL

Drug use prior to incarcer-ation	61.1%	77.8%	50%	27.3%
Alcohol use prior to incarcer-ation	68.5%	85.2%	58.3%	45.5%

DAILY

Drug use prior to incarcer-ation	46.3%	81%	83.3%	0%
Alcohol use prior to incarcer-ation	24.1%	34.8%	42.9%	0%

Of all respondents, *61% of the women reported drug use prior to incarceration*. Of those, 46% reported daily drug use with a notable exception being that no Latina woman reported daily drug use or daily alcohol use. General *alcohol use prior to incarceration was reported by 68% overall*, and daily alcohol use was 24%.

Anglo Europeans were twice as likely to report drug (78%) and alcohol (85%) use in general prior to incarceration over any other group; African American women 50% and 58% respectively, and Latina 27% and 45 % respectively.

In this study, the higher incidence of reported general substance abuse correlates with the higher incidence of reported childhood abuse history. This does not vary across all three ethnic/ racial groups. In addition, response to childhood abuse and trauma in the home was highly correlated with those specifically reporting alcohol abuse.

CURRENT AND ONGOING MEDICAL PROBLEMS

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo- European	African American	Latina
Ongoing medical problems	46.3% / n = 51	44.4%	25%	58.3%
Other	37.2%	63.6%	66.7%	42.9%
Asthma	14.3%	9.1%	0%	28.6%
Mental Health Issues	11.4%	27.3%	0%	14.3%
Head-aches	11.4%	18.2%	0%	0%
Diabetes	11.4%	18.2%	33.3%	14.3%
Seizures	5.7%	9.1%	0%	14.3%
Heart and Lung	8.6%	9.1%	0%	0%

Forty six percent of the respondents reported the need for ongoing medical treatment. There is a need to look at the category of "Other" (34%) more carefully. Respondents could list as many health problems as applicable, thus within any category, percentages correspond to frequency of listing. These were the categories which had the greatest frequency. It is important to look at other ways in which physical or psychological distress was described which do not fit into these categories, and may be more culturally relevant to a particular ethnic or racial group. For example, it is worth noting that diabetes was the only category of ongoing medical problem given by African-American women but 67% of their responses fell into the "Other" category. Only one person reported being HIV positive.

MAJOR LIFE EVENT WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF ARREST

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo-European	African American	Latina
Major life event	n = 47			
Within 12 months of arrest	61.1%			
1 event	58.1%			
2 events	29.0%			
3 events	9.7%			
5 events	3.2%			
Nature of event	n = 36			
Death		20%	12.5%	0%
Trouble with law		15%	12.5%	12.5%
Major illness		25%	12.5%	12.5%
Loss of relation-ship		45%	12.5%	25%

Over 60% of the respondents reported a major life event within 12 months of arrest, and 29% reported two major life events. It was hypothesized that a significant number of incarcerated women experienced major relational loss, 12 months prior to arrest. This was reported by 45% of Anglos, 25% of Latinas, and only 12.5% of the African-American women.

RELATIONAL PROFILE

MARITAL STATUS

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo-European	African American	Latina
Married	39%	51.9%	16.7%	16.7%
Living with significant other	37%	29.6%	58.3%	33.3%
Never married	33%	22.2%	50%	50%
Divorced	24%	33.3%	0%	16.7%
Widowed	11%	18.5%	0%	8.3%
Same sex relation-ship	19%	22.2%	25%	8.3%

Respondents could check all categories which applied at the time they completed the questionnaire. *Over 51% of the Anglo European women compared to 17% of both African-American and Latina women were married.* Thus it is three times as likely that an Anglo-European woman would report being married and twice as likely (33%) to be divorced than a Latina woman or three times as likely than an African-American woman in this population. None of the African-American women reported *being divorced or widowed. Nineteen percent of the Anglo women reported being widowed. African-American women were twice as likely to report living with a significant other (58.3%) compared to Anglo-European women (30%) and Latinas (33%).* Latina women were least likely to report being in a same sex relationship (8.3%) compared to 22% of Anglos and 25% of African-American women.

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VISITORS

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo-European	African American	Latina
Receive visitors	90.7% / n = 54	100%	66.7%	91.7%
Relation to prisoner	n = 46			
Male friend	57.4	70.4%	37.5	72.7%
Female friend	40.7%	40.7%	50%	54.5%
Sister	38.9%	40.7%	25%	63.6%
Mother	37%	48.1%	50%	27.3%
Daughter	35.2%	29.6%	25%	54.5%
Brother	33.3%	25.9%	37.5%	72.7%
Female Cousin	20.4%	11.1%	50%	27.3%
Aunt	16.7%	22.2%	0	18.2%
Father	16.7%	22.2%	12.5%	18.2%
Uncle	14.8%	11.1%	12.5%	27.3%
Frequency of visitors	n = 46			
At least once per week	29.6%	44.4%	25%	18.2%
At least once per month	40.7%	29.6%	37.5%	81.8%

A very high percentage of women report having visitors (90.7%). This is interesting given that the prison site is rural with no public transportation

readily available nearby. Transportation to the site is also expensive for connecting taxis to nearest bus lines. Thus, despite the obstacles, visitors come, but *this does vary by ethnic and racial group: 100% of Anglo Europeans and 91.7% of Latina women but only 66% of the African American women report visitors (p<.01).* Given the geographic distribution of the women in the state prison system, the particular minimum security site is not convenient for any particular group of women in prison. Most of women in this prison come from other geographic areas in the state.

One significant correlation with visitors is that 68% of women who reported abuse as a child also reported their mother did not visit (p<.05). Of the women incarcerated for the first time, 95% receive visitors, only 77% of women with multiple incarcerations receive visitors (p<.05).

Male visitors

Overall, Anglo women (70%) and Latina women (72.7%) are twice as likely to have a male friend visit than African-American women (37.5%). Male siblings are twice as likely to visit Latina women (72.7%) than African-American women (37.5%) and Anglo women (25.9%). Brother-in-laws visit Latina women (12.5%0 but not Anglo women (0%) (p<.01).

Female visitors

Sisters are more likely to visit Anglo women (40.7%) and Latina women (63.6%) than African-American women (25%). However, *50% of the African-American women report female cousins visiting compared to Anglo women (11.1%) and Latina women (27.3%).* Mothers are twice as likely to visit Anglo women (48.1%) than Latina women (27.3%), and daughters are almost twice as likely to visit Latina women (54.5%) than Anglo (29.6%) and African-American women (25%).

Frequency of visitors

Anglo European women (44.4%) report the most frequent visits on a weekly basis, however Latina women (81.8%) report most frequent monthly visits. For African-American women, the frequency of visitors on a weekly or monthly basis is not significantly different.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo-European	African American	Latina
Children	n = 54			
Have children	81.5%	81.5%	75%	83.3%
Death of a child	15% / n = 41	18.2%	22.2%	10%
Number of children				
1	25%			
2	34%			
3	14%			
4	16%			
5 or more	11%			

Eighty two percent of the women are mothers with 15% of the whole group reporting the death of a child and 11% were pregnant while incarcerated. Death of a child was correlated with first time incarcerated (p<.05). Surprisingly, *only 14.3% (n=44) reported their children are in the custody of DSS.* However, *39% (n=44) of the children are not living with their sibling(s).* Over 30% (n=43) have children over age 18. Over 33% of the mothers with children between age 0-3 years (n=6) never see them. *Of the mothers with children age 4-9 years, less than 53% see their children within 12 months, less than 38% see their children every month.* Of the mothers with children age 10-13, and 14 -18, 50% see the children every four weeks. Thus, the younger the child, the less likely he or she will visit the mother.

A woman's mother is most likely to bring the child to visit (28%), with a male friend the second most frequent person (16%).

NEEDS ON RELEASE FROM PRISON

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo-European	African American	Latina
Planning for release	n = 37			
responded but did not answer question	33%	33.3%	40%	55.6%
adjustment and transition	17.4%	27.8%	10%	22.2%
Housing / relocating	15.2%	11.1%	30%	11.1%
Setting plans	13%	22.2%	10%	11.1%
Work/ training	6.5%	5.6%	0%	11.1%
Support from friends	6.5%	16.7%	0%	0%
Financial	4.3%	0%	10%	0%
Other	4.3%	5.6%	10%	0%

Of those who responded, on release, *100% of Latina women plan to live with other people compared to 63% of Anglo European women and 50% of African American women* (p<.01).

In terms of stated needs, *30% of the African-American women said they needed housing and assistance with relocating compared to 11.1% of both Latina and Anglo women.* Related to this, 0% of the Latina women and African-American women reported needing support from friends. None of the Latina and Anglo women reported needing financial assistance and only 10% of the African-American women did. None of the African-American women reported needing work/training while only 5.6% Anglos and 11.1% Latinas did.

The highest reported needs were support with adjustment and transition, Anglo (27.8%) and Latina (22.2%), housing/relocation for African-

American women (30%) and assistance in setting plans, Anglos (22.2%), African-American women (10%) and Latinas (11.1%).

SKILLS

Category	Total n or percent	Anglo-European	African American	Latina
Skills at present	n = 48			
Computer	13.2%	28%	25%	18.2%
Secretarial/ office	12.1%	24%	16.7%	27.3%
Hairdresser / Cosmetology-	9.9%	16%	25%	9.1%
Home Economic/ child care / clean	9.9%	16%	25%	9.1%
Nurses Aid / medical	7.7%	12%	25%	9.1%
Social work / human services	6.6%	12%	8.3%	18.2%
Vocational trades	6.6%	4%	25%	18.2%
Waitress / bartender	5.5%	12%	8.3%	0%
Sales	4.4%	12%	8.3%	0%
Don't know	2.2%	8%	0%	0%
Don't have any skills	5.5%	4%	0%	27.3%
Other	16.5%	28%	25%	45.5%

Twenty seven percent of Latina women report they don't have any skills for employment compared to Anglo Europeans (4%) and African-Americans (0%). None of the African-American women or the Latina women report "don't know" when asked about job skills at present,

compared to 8% of Anglo European women. African-American women were twice as likely to report nurse's aid skills than Anglos (12%) and Latina women (9.1%) and the African-American women reported higher percentages of hairdresser, home economic and vocational trade skills.

IV. A Relational and Diversity framework for psycho-educational process groups

A framework for psycho-educational process groups was developed for training staff and providing intervention with incarcerated women in a security facility. The content of the groups was based on an integration of the Stone Center relational theory of women's development, a manual for psycho educational process groups using this model written by Dooley, Kaufman, and Surrey (1990), and the social diversity theory framework developed by Chin, De La Cancela and Jenkins (1993). In addition, the aspects of relational and social diversity theory presented in the groups was influenced by information gathered from the incarcerated women through the focus groups and questionnaires, and from interviews with prison line staff and correctional administrators.

The purpose of the training was (1) to integrate relational theory and diversity issues into the understanding of the life experiences of incarcerated women and (2) reduce stress for both staff and incarcerated women through understanding women's developmental needs and recognition of contextual differences, including race, ethnicity, class and gender.

One of the main goals of the training was to make relational theory and diversity concepts understandable and useful to participants in the workplace, with co-workers and incarcerated women. It was also hoped that these concepts might be found beneficial at a personal level. The specific topics covered were: the importance of relationships in women's development; the characteristics of healthy relationships and the diverse forms they take across culture and social class; the concepts of connection, disconnection and violation as defined by differing cultural and class perspectives; the consequences of trauma on behavior of women; the reframing of anger; and conflict resolution with an emphasis on ethnic, race and class differences as sources of conflict.

The six sessions are listed below by title with a brief description of their content.

Session 1: Relational Development of Women

The focus was on women's strengths, differences in women's and men's psychological development, and differences in women's development across racial and ethnic groups.

Session 2: Healthy Relationships

The hallmarks of healthy relationships as they are expressed across cultures was expressed.

Session 3: Connection, Disconnection and Violation

The dysfunctional family and the resulting coping strategies developed by people who grow up in a dysfunctional household were explored and discussed. Participants and leaders shared how the same coping strategies in another context, that which exist in some families of color, represent adaptive responses to living in an oppressive society.

Session 4: Disconnection and Violation: Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and Alcoholism

Causes of post traumatic stress and the resultant behaviors, how to interact with women suffering from post traumatic stress syndrome and a relational view of alcoholism and substance abuse were presented and discussed.

Session 5: Embracing Diversity

Key sources of human diversity were highlighted. Differential cultural values were reviewed. Exploration of how history, societal influences and individual backgrounds challenge possibilities for embracing diversity occurred. This session proposed that embracing diversity is a component of healthy relational process and examined what authentically embracing diversity does and does not include.

Session 6: Conflict Resolution

Exercises to understand personal style of handling conflict were done. A relational model of conflict as growth was presented. New understandings of anger and diversity and how they affect conflict were explored. Gender, race and ethnicity as influences on conflict style was included.

Although there was a separate session on embracing diversity the issue of diversity was addressed in all six sessions of the training. This was done by showing how different racial or ethnic groups would look in terms of their strengths, normative coping style or conflict style, to name a few. The ethnic and racial groups highlighted were Anglo-European, African American and Puerto Rican which are the ethnic and racial groups present in the population of staff, administrators and women in program at the project site.

Pilot testing and evaluation: DOC staff

Six sessions of two hour duration using a psycho-educational approach were offered. The training took place at MCI-Lancaster in the chapel. Staff members were grouped according to job description, with supervisors and line staff meeting separately. The groups were interactive and experiential, alternately focusing on staff's feelings, thoughts and behaviors and then on those of incarcerated women. Each session contained scenarios based on actual experiences at MCI-Lancaster. Participants were encouraged to observe their own and incarcerated women's behaviors between sessions around specific issues. This was accomplished by each participant filling out a Personal Observation Worksheet between sessions. The Personal Observation Worksheets had a different focus each week which was related to the topic of the next session.

Leaders' presentations were given in short segments and continually informed by the participants' day-to-day experience at the prison and in their personal lives. Participants were encouraged to question anything the leaders presented and to incorporate their own point of view. A reference list was included for each session. Many of the references were from the Stone Center's Working Papers Series, *Work in Progress.* Each participants had the opportunity to choose three of a selected group of papers on relevant topics as

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part of the support materials for the training. Handouts were given at each session highlighting the major points of the session.

The groups were co-led by facilitators familiar with relational theory and diversity issues. There was ethnic and racial diversity within the training team, which included one African-American woman and two Anglo European women. All three leaders had a strong clinical background in work with women and in leading psycho-educational training groups. The tone set by the leaders was one of authenticity and mutuality so that everyone, leaders and participants alike, could expand their knowledge of themselves and incarcerated women. The leaders presented themselves as experts in relational theory and learners in reference to prison work. Relational theory by definition is one that is ever expanding and open to adjustments based on input from groups and individuals who believe they are not appropriately represented in the theory, therefore people in the group were engaged in the process of expanding relational theory as it applies to incarcerated women and marginalized women.

Participants

There were two educational-process groups for DOC staff: one for administrators and supervisors, and another for line staff. There were eleven participants who began in the line staff group (eight line staff and three contract service providers from an on-site substance abuse treatment program). Eight participants completed the training. The supervisors' group began with eight participants. Three participants completed the full training program and two completed half the training.

The participants who stayed in the training were actively involved and reported during the verbal feedback that the group had been excellent for them especially as a way to ameliorate cynicism and lack of compassion both of which are signs of chronic stress in the work place.

Process Evaluation

Evaluation of the training sessions was accomplished in two ways.
First there was an informal sharing at the end of each session in which
participants were asked what elements of the training they wanted started,
continued or stopped. At the very end of the session, an anonymous
evaluation form was distributed by a volunteer from the group after the
leaders had left the room for the day. The formative evaluation presented 9
statements which required a response on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from
"strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". In addition to the session
evaluations which had some repeated statements and some which were
keyed to the content of the session, there was also an overall evaluation
administered at the end of the sixth session. The following is a summary of
these findings:

- Participants regularly endorsed the "strongly agree" or "agree"
choices when asked if they felt the leaders created an environment in
which they could express themselves.

- In the Overall Evaluation, participants were asked to rank-order the
sessions from the most informative to the least informative. Every
session was ranked as the most informative by at least one participant
except the session on dysfunctional families.

- Participants (75%) wanted "more" on the session on Embracing
Diversity. In the session on Dysfunctional Families, 62% circled
"more". The responses to the multiple questions about preference
showed that all topics were well received.

- In terms of how the training affected their jobs, all participants circled
the "agree" choices when given the statements: "I have a greater
understanding of incarcerated women as a result of the training"; "The
training has helped me to improve the quality of my interactions with
co-workers."; "The training has helped me to improve the quality of
my interactions with incarcerated women and/or men."; and "I now

have a greater appreciation for at least one cultural group other than my own.".

• Participants mentioned in their open ended written responses and their closing comments that they had actually changed the way they performed their job by increasing interaction on a daily basis with incarcerated women. They also described feeling better about themselves, and believing that they were averting problems at work, with incarcerated women, by being more proactive and accessible. Others talked about being revitalized and being more compassionate.

• The line staff group reported that after participating in the training, their professional interaction would now be of a higher quality because they now know each other on a different, deeper level based on the training. They had greater respect for the diversity in their professional and personal differences, and understood the significance of working on this understanding through a group process.

Recommendations

The recommendations below are based on the participant evaluations:

• Offer training to all Department of Correction staff who have contact with incarcerated women (e.g.. line staff, supervisors, administrators, contract program and service providers, kitchen staff, etc.)

• Make The Stone Center Relational and Diversity Training part of the annual selection of recognized DOC training.

• Implement the training with consultants from outside the Department of Correction who are recognized by The Stone Center as qualified to apply the training framework.

• Inform the training with the expertise of the participants.

• Establish on site peer supervision which is issue-oriented and incorporates a monthly consultation with a Stone Center consultant who is versed in relational and diversity training.

• Maintain the multiple session format.
- Modify format by increasing session to 3 hours.
- Use increases in time to expand the embracing diversity and conflict resolution components of the training.
- Take training off-site, to a location close to the prison so that participants can concentrate on the training and sessions decreasing the possibility of job related interruptions.
- Offer co-workers the possibility of collaborating in group small groups of 5-6 with a maximum of 8 for best interactive process.

Pilot testing and evaluation: Incarcerated Women

The final phase of the Women in Prison Project was a demonstration of the Educational Process group with women incarcerated at MCI-Lancaster. This group was similar to the training for staff, but adapted in some critical ways to fit the needs of incarcerated women and goals of the project. The group was designed to introduce relational and social diversity theory to incarcerated women, to encourage them to recognize and embrace relationships and diversity in ways which would make sense in their lives and support their growth and health in and after their experiences of prison.

The goal of the leadership team for this group was to observe and experience a capacity for mutuality among this group of women, so often devalued in traditional psychological theories in terms of an invaluable, core aspect of a relationship. We hoped that the women would be able to relate to the theory as it was presented to them and that the theory would apply in some way to the lives of these women. In addition, it was anticipated that their experience in the group could shed light upon the theory at The Stone Center.

Participants

All women who had participated in The Stone Center focus groups and were still on site at MCI-Lancaster were invited to this group. Other women incarcerated at MCI-Lancaster were also invited, but priority was given to those women who had participated in the focus groups. A time was set for the group, and sign-up sheets were posted in the women's houses.

The women in this group were diverse in several significant ways. Four women were Latina and three Caucasians. The Latina women varied with regard to fluency in English, and one of the Caucasian women also spoke Spanish. By self report, the women ranged in age from 19 to 62. There were both first time and repeat offenders in the group, and the length of sentences the women received varied a great deal. Also, while some of the women in this group had been incarcerated for less than one year, several women had spent the last seven to nine years in prison. While their specific offenses varied, the majority were serving time for drug related crimes.

Leaders

There were three group co-leaders, two Caucasian women and one Latina woman. Two of the leaders were fluent in both Spanish and English. All three were experienced at leading groups with women. One of the leaders had helped to develop the training framework upon which the group was based, and the other two had experience working with incarcerated women. The diversity, communication, and relationships that were modeled by the leaders were a key to the success of this group, lending authenticity and hence credibility beyond or despite the shortness of the length of the group.

Format

The group consisted of five weekly sessions of one and a half hour each. There was a unique topic each week, progressing in the following sequence: Relational Development, Healthy Relationships, the Depressive Spiral and Addiction, Embracing Diversity, and Conflict Resolution. These topics were similar to topics in the staff training, however it should be noted here that sessions on dysfunctional families and post traumatic stress

syndrome were not considered appropriate for the incarcerated women's group at this time, due in part to the limit of psychological services available to the women at this site. Also the "information" component of the group was somewhat lessened here, allowing more time for discussion and processing.

The group was conducted primarily in English, but because more than half of the women spoke Spanish as their first language, the leaders made an effort to translate when possible and appropriate. What began as taking time aside for translation of key concepts turned into one of the key learning pieces of the group, which will be discussed further in group observations.

Each session began with a brief check-in by everyone present. This was a chance for each woman to let others know how she was feeling and to connect with the group. It was also an opportunity to share any feelings about the last group meeting, new insights, or suggestions for changes before moving into the week's discussion.

After everyone had checked in, discussion or activities about the topic for that week were begun. Much attention was given to achieving a balance between the straight "information" component and the opportunity for group members to process what they were learning and have a sense of input about the group. The way this balance was achieved varied from week to week including exercises such as the following:

- generating their own lists of feelings or characteristics in response to the week's topic,
- encouraging women to give feedback to one another,
- encouraging women to disagree with the material presented,
- sharing relevant personal experiences with the group.

Often the group would be able to experience the topics in an active way, and the role of the leaders would become to give the women the words to know and to affirm what they were actually *doing*.

The session ended with check-out, an opportunity for each member to respond to the process of the group. In the last three sessions, there were evaluation forms to be completed by the incarcerated women.

Process Evaluation

Group members evaluated the experience of this group with written responses to questionnaires at the end of sessions three and four, and a written overall evaluation after session five. The written evaluations were in English, and women who had difficulty with English were assisted by one of the leaders. They also had the opportunity to share feelings about the group at the beginning and end of each session, and leaders took note of these observations.

At the end of sessions 3 and 4, group members were asked to complete an evaluation. The evaluation consisted of eleven statements to which the women could respond on a seven point scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," and two open-ended questions. Responses to many of the eleven statements were consistent from session 3 to session 4, so the discussion here combines the two weeks' responses.

Positive responses ("strongly agree" and "agree") to the statement, "The leaders helped to make me feel comfortable in the group," and disagreement (all responses were between "somewhat disagree" and "strongly disagree") with the statement, "It is hard for me to talk in this group because I am in a group of women with whom I live," indicate that the women felt a level of comfort and trust within the group.

Other responses indicated that women in the group were learning about themselves. Most women "agreed" with the statement "Today's group helped me to see some of my strengths." Some members "strongly agreed" with that statement, and there was only one neutral "neither agree nor disagree" response. "This group helped me to have a better understanding of myself" was another statement to which all but one of the women indicated agreement.

The evaluation also looked at the women's relationships with others. In this aspect, there seemed to be a shift from week 3 to week 4. After session 3, three of the participants remained neutral about the statement, "The group is helping me to have better interactions with other incarcerated women," and the other four "somewhat agreed," "agreed," or "strongly agreed." After the fourth week's group, however, all either "agreed" or "somewhat agreed" with that sentence. There was also a shift as to the statement, "This group has helped me to respect others who are different than me." The evaluations after

session 3 showed that most women agreed with this statement, but included one woman who neither agreed nor disagreed, and one who strongly disagreed. Session 4 showed all women agreeing or somewhat agreeing with this statement.

Responses to the statement, "The group is helping me to have better interaction with staff" ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," with the majority responding neutrally.

After responding to these statements, women were asked to reflect on the most important thing about that day's group. Some women described information or discussions that held meaning for them, such as, "talking about interactions with people we trust and don't trust." Others mentioned an emotional connection to the group, such as feeling "connection with women," or "feeling better than I did when I walked in."

All responses to "Tell us anything that you wish we would change" indicated either they did not want anything changed, or they felt the need for more time in sessions, and more groups to continue. This request for more time was echoed often in check-out at the end of sessions, and also in the "other comments" space on the overall evaluation.

Perhaps the most striking responses came when asked to describe any changes which had occurred in them or others as a result of the group. Three of the six responses were about positive change in relationships, such as, "more open with my friend" and "more of a bonding with peers." This is significant first in that the women are recognizing and moving toward more open or healthy relationships. It is also important to note that the women in this group were able to apply what they were learning in the group to their lives outside of the group.

Most of thes women who completed the overall evaluation "strongly agreed" and the other "agreed" with the statement that they would recommend the group to others.

Only two women identified topics that would have been helpful to them but were missing from this group. One woman wrote, "How to deal with rejection and letting go. Self esteem." The other wrote, "Yes, more about men/women relationship and how to know a good relationship."

Recommendations

The format of the group was well received. We would definitely encourage in groups in the future to follow our framework. However, feedback from the groups produced these suggestions:

- Emphasize the expansion of group meeting times.
- Establish different process groups based on the lengths of the women's sentences.
- Expand the frequency of process group meetings over a longer period of time
- Provide a place where women can examine their interactions with staff, so as to feel empowered to respond with them in a variety of ways
- Offer a bilingual/bicultural leader team to model positive relational differences.[7]

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[7] Further details on the psychoeducational framework are provided in the following document available from the Stone Center: Yarney, S., Jenkins, Y., and Dooley, C . *Relational and Diversity Training: Session Summaries.* The Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies, Wellesley College.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

In sum, to meet the needs of women in prison the following are suggested:

1. Develop a training program for staff at all levels in the Department of Correction which operationalizes relational theory and diversity in daily staff-to-staff and staff-to-inmate contacts;

2. Implement security and treatment services which are based on current research on women's development, not on-going, or out-dated, myths or male defined models;

3. Develop an integrated treatment model within the Department of Correction for incarcerated women which would:

   • provide mental health services for all incarcerated women which incorporates and implements a relational perspective in treatment and care;

   • embrace diversity and treat women within the cultural context of their relationships, including their roles as mothers;

   • incorporate research on behavioral, cognitive, moral and psychological gender differences;

   • provide educational process groups for offenders which model and enable women in prison to build mutually empowering relationships;

   • recognize the perceptions incarcerated women have of themselves.

In sum, to meet the needs of women recently released from prison, the following are suggested:

1. Develop and expand relational and diversity training framework to meet needs of the community care and treatment provider administration, treatment and line staff;

2. Create linkages to agencies and services for women being released to provide continuity of care during a crucial period of transition;

3. Ensure that mental health, substance abuse and other treatment services include:

- women's strengths and sources of cultural difference

- interventions which target and support the therapeutic settings which are critical to healthy relationships for women

- support networks for women in treatment with case managers and specialists (i.e., in parenting) in a home-based treatment model

- visions of addiction within social, economic and political contexts

- treatment staff model behaviors which are authentic and build mutually empowering relationships between staff members

- encouragement to clients to become active members of their chose communities.

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