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## The women in transition program: application of relational theory to an evaluation of a minimum security correctional center for female offenders

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THE *WOMEN IN TRANSITION* PROGRAM: APPLICATION OF  
RELATIONAL THEORY TO AN EVALUATION OF A MINIMUM  
SECURITY CORRECTIONAL CENTER FOR FEMALE OFFENDERS

A dissertation presented

by

Mary Ellen Mastrorilli

to

The Law, Policy, and Society Program

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in the field of

Law, Policy, and Society

Northeastern University  
Boston, Massachusetts  
April 30, 2008



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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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Northeastern University  
April 30, 2008

**THE WOMEN IN TRANSITION PROGRAM: APPLICATION OF  
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SECURITY CORRECTIONAL CENTER FOR FEMALE OFFENDERS**

**Abstract**

Women in the United States are being incarcerated in record numbers, despite a profile indicating that they are largely nonviolent offenders who turn to substance abuse and crime as coping mechanisms after suffering victimization. Using relational theory as its conceptual framework, this study evaluates a gender-specific correctional program for female offenders. Relational theory posits that healthy female psychological development arises from connection to others. When that connection is damaged by trauma and abuse, a dominant characteristic among female offenders, some women enter a downward spiral marked by addiction to substances and criminal deviance. To examine this phenomenon, quantitative data analysis is used to measure the post-release outcomes of 380 *Women in Transition* program participants over an 18-month follow-up period. Logistic regression confirmed findings generated from bivariate analyses suggesting that age, criminal history, and program completion are predictive factors for successful reintegration. Qualitative data gathered through staff and inmate focus groups advance the proposition that the *Women in Transition* program is sensitive to the relational needs of its participants and might be an additional factor in reducing future offending.

## Acknowledgements

In her memoir, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright writes of the loneliness that accompanies students on the journey to complete their doctoral dissertations. While I agree with this depiction, I do not lack for people to thank. I extend my first words of gratitude to my dissertation committee. The committee chair, Dr. Joan Fitzgerald, served a key role. Technically, she was the principal investigator in this study. In reality, she was the motivator and ally who kept me optimistic, confident, and buoyed during some of the lowest points in the process. I euphemistically describe one setback as a “data glitch.” She encouraged me when I believed I had no reason to be encouraged, and I overcame the obstacle. I am indebted to Professor Mary O’Connell. Her detailed, painstaking reading of the first two drafts went beyond what any reasonable person could expect, and my work improved greatly because of it. Dr. Amy Farrell, in just the right *measures*, pushed me to probe deeply the frightening world of statistics. I cannot give Dr. Farrell any greater compliment than in the retelling of a story where a fellow doctoral candidate told me she would never ask Amy to be on her committee because she was “too tough.” My dissertation benefited from this toughness and for that I am deeply grateful. My outside reader, Dr. Daniel LeClair, taught me critical lessons in perspective. It is easy to lose focus when you are deeply involved in such a consuming project. Dr. LeClair kept me on track and often reminded me that a dissertation was really nothing more than “practice research.”

The topic of this study is the *Women in Transition* program, a program operated by the Essex County Sheriff's Department. Without the support of Sheriff Frank Cousins, this study would not have been possible. I am profoundly grateful for his willingness in allowing me to undertake this project. It speaks to his progressive leadership and Essex County has benefited from his vision. I am deeply grateful to Deputy Superintendent Kimberly Jo O'Hara. Deputy O'Hara was the director of the *Women in Transition* program during the time this study was being conducted. She promised and delivered "carte blanche" access to records, staff, and program participants. Two of her key staff members, Michelle Walsh and Heidi Bumpus, were extraordinarily helpful to me as I pored over confusing criminal records and incomplete case files. They filled in many "holes" in the data and went to great lengths to get me access to focus group participants.

Being given "carte blanche" to data and human subjects does not guarantee unfettered access to such. With the approval of the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB), I carried out a study that was protective of the most precious commodity associated with it – the female offenders serving their time in the *Women in Transition* program. I am especially grateful to Nan Regina, Northeastern's Director of Research Integrity, who was my liaison with the IRB, and helped me navigate the full review process.

The idea to pursue a doctoral degree was planted by two colleagues for whom I have immense respect – Dr. Maureen Norton-Hawk and Dr. Stefan

LoBuglio. They saw in me the potential to pursue a dream and believed that the corrections field would be better for it. I thank them both for their encouragement and will continue to work hard to add to the scholarship on correctional policy.

As the project neared its end, I accepted offers of help from graduate students affiliated with my place of employment. I am pleased to acknowledge them – Kristin Boches, Kimberly Morris, Xiaoyu “Rainie” Jiang, and Laura Bui.

A special thank you is in order for Dr. Theresa Gilmore. She, more than anyone, kept me grounded and sane for the better part of three years. I will never forget the life lessons I learned from our collaborative work.

Other than the writers, the individuals most affected by the demands of a dissertation are usually family members. I will be forever indebted to my family for their patience and understanding during extended periods of my unavailability and distraction. I promise – I will never do another dissertation again.

There are many other people deserving of acknowledgement, but if I were to do that in this space, it would rival the length of this thesis. Many friends and colleagues provided a steady stream of support, wisdom, kind words, hugs, and free lunches. They know who they are; and with my life reclaimed, they will be the beneficiaries of free lunches and more.

My final words of thanks are reserved for my spouse, Dr. Kelley O’Neel. Through death, devastation, and dissertation she helped me find faith. Thank you, Kel, from the very bottom of my heart.

*Dedicated to the memory of my parents,  
Frank P. and Ellen M. Mastrorilli*

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**Introduction to the *Women in Transition* Program: Application of Relational Theory to the Evaluation of a Minimum Security Correctional Center for Female Offenders**

More men and women are going to prison today than at any other time in our nation's history and, strikingly, unlike their male counterparts, most women are serving time for non-violent offenses (Belknap, 2007; Robinson, 2002). The profile of these women shows a population living on the margins of society and disadvantaged in almost every major sphere of life – education, physical and mental health, economic self-sufficiency, and family relationships (Greenfeld & Snell, 2000). Now that our nation's prisons are full, what do we do with this criminal underclass, 95% of whom are eventually released (Hughes & Wilson, 2003)? Should correctional policy address the unique needs of the female offender or is incapacitation enough to prevent subsequent offending? This thesis attempts to answer these questions.

The goals of criminal sentencing are variously articulated as general deterrence [crime control through fear of criminal penalties], specific deterrence [reducing repeat offenses], proportionality [make the punishment fit the crime], and rehabilitation [reforming the criminal offender] (Siegel and Senna, 2007). These are legitimate rationales in a society seeking to promote fairness, justice, and social stability, but these values do not disappear at the penitentiary gate. They carry over into the policies and practices of correctional institutions, in the

expectation that offenders who enter the system as criminals, exit as law-abiding citizens. Unfortunately, the evidence shows otherwise. While some correctional programs have better outcomes than others, the vast majority of prisoners (over 67%), regardless of gender, will be rearrested within three years, with many returning to prison (Greenfeld & Snell, 2000; Langan & Levin, 2002). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2007), state correctional expenditures increased 619% in the period 1982 to 2004, reaching \$65 billion dollars. From a public policy perspective, we must question the efficacy of the correctional system in general, and we need to identify programs that deliver promising results.

This study examines the effectiveness of a small, community-based correctional facility housing female offenders: the *Women in Transition (WIT)* program, located in Salisbury, Massachusetts. It seeks to explain, through the theoretical lens of relational theory, largely positive outcomes associated with program participation. Additionally, it describes in rich detail the experiences of employees who operate and manage the *WIT* program; and it gives voice to the women who are incarcerated there. *WIT* is a low-security prison that strives to prepare women for a successful return to their communities.

Chapter 1 of this study provides a review of the literature, and lays out the theoretical framework on which the study is based. It provides an overview of incarceration trends and the characteristics of the female offender population nationally and in Massachusetts. I discuss some of the collateral consequences

associated with the growing imprisonment of women. I then review what we know about incarcerated women and their reentry to the community, while exploring the nature of correctional programming for women. The chapter closes with a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of the broad research question: Is *WIT*, as a gender-specific program for female offenders, effective because it meets the relational needs of the population it serves? The term, relational needs, is used in the context of relational theory (Miller, 1976) which posits that women's psychological growth occurs through connection, affiliation, and relationship with others; whereas men's growth is based on autonomy, separation, and independence. A much fuller discussion of the theory occurs in the subsequent chapters.

Examining the question noted above contributes to the scholarship on the nature and efficacy of female offender programming, a timely topic given the growth of the female offender population.

Chapter 2 describes the method of analysis. The study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. I provide the rationale for such an approach, and then describe in detail the *WIT* program, the research design, and the data collection process. I also provide a description of the variables studied and the justification for their selection.

Chapter 3 presents the results of the quantitative analysis of data gleaned from 380 inmate case records. I focus on the program participants' rates of

reoffending, also known as recidivism. This datum is vital, because it focuses on one of the central goals of punishment: specific deterrence. Society sanctions law breakers to deter them from committing future crimes. The chapter also describes the characteristics of the offenders in the program, and illuminates the significant differences between program recidivists and non-recidivists.

Chapter 4 addresses the question: why is the program effective in reducing recidivism among its participants? From this initial inquiry I introduce the results of the qualitative analysis, discussing the themes uncovered in a series of focus groups conducted with the program staff and inmates. I discuss the program's unique characteristics, its strengths and weaknesses, and its organizational culture, all within a theoretical context that I describe as "relational recovery." Focus groups were designed to help identify the characteristics of the program that contribute to inmate success. Specifically, they provided data on how the program increased relational recovery and its link to successful reentry.

Chapter 5 summarizes the important findings of the study. It also discloses the study's limitations and discusses the policy implications of the findings. It identifies the strengths and weaknesses of *Women in Transition Program*, and where weaknesses are noted, I make recommendations for improvement. I end the chapter with suggestions for further research.

## Chapter 1 – Literature Review and Theoretical Underpinnings

### An Overview of Incarceration Trends

Most scholars agree that crime is predominantly a male activity (Braithewaite, 1989; Heidensohn, 1995; Hirshi & Gottfredson, 1993). Base rates of incarcerated men and women have been, and continue to be, dramatically dissimilar. For example, at year end 2004, about 1.4 million males were imprisoned in the United States, compared to roughly 107,000 females (Harrison & Beck, 2007). However, recent trend data point to a narrowing of the gap (Bloom & Chesney-Lind, 2003; Chesney-Lind, 2004; Currie, 1998; Muraskin, 2003). In 2005, there were over 107,000 women in prison in the United States (Harrison and Beck, 2006). This figure is a 57% increase since 1995, when the federal government initiated year-end counts of offenders in the United States and its territories (Ibid.). Though the raw numbers of incarcerated women are dwarfed by the male figures, it is the rate of change that is notable. See Table 1.1

**Table 1.1 – Imprisonment and Rate of Change by Gender – United States**

	1995		2005		Change	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>Prisoners</b>	68,468	1,057,406	107,518	1,418,406	+57%	+34%

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Prisoners in 2005* (2006)

The incarceration rate (i.e., inmates per 100,000 residents) of females in the United States was 47 in 1995 (Gillard & Beck, 1996). By year end 2005, it

had increased to 65. In the decade 1995 to 2005, the average annual increase in incarcerations for males was 3%, whereas for females, it was 6% (Harrison & Beck, 2006). Massachusetts' trends generally reflect the national trend for males, but show a steeper increase for females. According to the Massachusetts Department of Correction 2006 *Annual Report*, offender commitments for the years 1997 to 2006, inclusive, show that the male offender population grew by 2% (from 2,006 to 2,046); while the female offender population increased 13% (from 971 to 1,101) (MA Department of Correction, 2006).

The steady increase in female prisoners contrasts starkly with the dangerousness of their offending behavior. Data indicate that women are being punished for less serious crimes as compared to men. This phenomenon is not new. There is a long tradition in the United States of disproportionately arresting girls over boys for status offenses<sup>1</sup> such as truancy, running away from home, and drinking alcohol (Zaplin, 2008). One explanation for this is that deviance and delinquency violate the norms of femininity for which there are lower levels of social tolerance (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996). Table 1.2 shows that over 65% of female prisoners in state institutions are serving sentences for non-violent crimes. The comparable figure for men is 47%.

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<sup>1</sup> A status offense is an act that is considered criminal if committed by a juvenile but not an adult. (Siegal & Senna, 2007).

**Table 1.2 – Estimated Number and Percent Distribution of Prisoners in the Jurisdiction of State Correctional Authorities by Gender, 2003**

Type of Offense	Female			Male		
	N	%	Cum %	N	%	Cum %
<b>Other</b>	600	0.8%	0.8%	6,200	0.5%	0.5%
<b>Public Order</b>	4,400	5.3%	6.1%	82,000	7.0%	7.5%
<b>Drug</b>	24,100	29.1%	35.2%	226,800	19.3%	26.8%
<b>Property</b>	24,900	30%	65.2%	237,100	20.2%	47%
<b>Violent</b>	28,800	34.8%	100%	621,600	53%	100%
<b>Prison Inmates</b>	82,800			1,173,600		

Source: *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics Online*

Note: All estimates were rounded to the nearest 100 and may not add to total.

After reviewing these figures, I wanted to determine if there were significant differences between male and female prisoners in each of the offense categories. I conducted z tests<sup>2</sup> of the differences and found that they were statistically significant at the .01 level for both groups in each category of offense. This finding suggests that there is a highly skewed distribution of offenses between men and women prisoners. Women's prisons have lower proportions of violent offenders than prisons for men. Murder is an example. Even though homicide rates have been trending downward for both males and females, the rate

<sup>2</sup> A z score standardizes data so that comparisons between two groups can be made.

for women was 2.3 per 100,000 in 2005, the lowest recorded since 1976 (BJS, 2006).

An examination of violent offending in Massachusetts uncovered a similar pattern. I found the ten-year trend for both male and female prisoners remained remarkably stable, but skewed - - roughly 18 % of women served time for crimes against the person, as compared to 52% of males (MA Department of Correction, 2006).

This paradox of harsh sanctions leveled against a largely nonviolent population is not unique to adult female prisoners. Juvenile female offenders show no strong propensities toward violence either. Steffensmeier, et al. (2005), conducted a longitudinal assessment of girls' violent behavior from 1980 to 2003. They gathered data from three information sources, to address violent crime from the perspectives of law enforcement, crime victims, and the girls themselves. The sources used in the study were arrest reports from the FBI, victim data from the National Crime Victimization Survey, and two adolescent self-report surveys – the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, (collective information from high school students), and the Monitoring the Future Survey (focusing on students in the 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades). The authors found that the arrest rates of girls (per 100,000) increased from 21% in 1980 to 34% in 2003 but trends in the victims' reporting of violence and the self-report surveys remained “almost perfectly stable across the 1980 – 2003 period” (Ibid.:378). The researchers concluded that the

increase in arrests was due to net-widening<sup>3</sup> policies in law enforcement and juvenile justice agencies, rather than changes in girls' behavior. The authors further noted that juvenile and female offender statistics tell us as much about the *policies* of crime control as the actual *criminals* themselves. These policies reflect a growing intolerance of girls' deviant behavior, particularly by parents, teachers, social workers, and law enforcement (Ibid.).

The differences in male and female offending, especially as they relate to violence, are so salient, LeClair (1991) cogently argues, that incarcerating women may be an inappropriate use of confinement. Analyzing data from the Massachusetts Department of Correction, LeClair revealed a disturbing contradiction. Despite women's shorter criminal careers, lower levels of dangerousness, lower rates of escape, and shorter sentences, they received fewer paroles and were less likely to be approved for the home furlough program than men. LeClair found, too, that they recidivated at higher levels, suggesting that their harsher treatment might produce poorer post-release outcomes. Though the study is dated, the anomalies exposed persist. According to the Massachusetts Department of Correction *Release to the Streets Report* (2005), in terms of dangerousness (i.e., a governing offense designated as a crime against the person, including sex crimes), 53% of released male offenders had served sentences for crimes against the person compared with 18% of released female offenders. Additionally, though the difference is slight proportionately, more males were

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<sup>3</sup> Steffensmeier describes net widening as "blurring distinctions between delinquency and antisocial behavior" (2005: 363).

paroled in 2005 (36%) than females (35%). These data would suggest that a higher proportion of dangerous males were given early releases from prison than dangerous females. Also, the 2006 Department of Correction *Annual Report* contained recidivism figures from 2002, showing a rate of female recidivism<sup>4</sup> higher than males (25% compared to 17%). The report does not discuss gender differences, but it is consistent with LeClair's earlier study. Thus, in the seventeen years since LeClair's analysis, many of the dynamics he noted continue.

Criminologist Charles H. Logan (1993) states that:

Justice is the quality of treating individuals according to their rights and in ways that they deserve to be treated by virtue of relevant conduct. Criminal justice is rights-respecting treatment that is deserved by virtue of criminal conduct (:20).

From Logan's perspective, one could argue that the criminal justice system in Massachusetts is unfair in its treatment of the female prisoner population because less dangerous conduct in the aggregate would seem to warrant greater placement in community-based supervision programs, such as parole. However, state data do not support this proposition.

A key factor in understanding the upward trend in all incarceration rates is the "war on drugs" – a term coined by President Richard Nixon in 1971 and revitalized by President Ronald Reagan ten years later (Bush-Baskette, 2000). The "war on drugs" describes the policy response to illicit drug use through the criminal justice system (Gray, 2001). This strategy, which encompassed harsh

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<sup>4</sup> In this report, recidivism was defined as reincarceration within 12 months after release.

punishments, such as mandatory sentences, has contributed significantly to the increase in incarceration rates, particularly for females. Nationally, 29% of incarcerated women are in prison for drug offenses compared to 19% of men (Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 2003). Though drug control policy is supposed to capture the leaders of major drug enterprises and to reduce the violence that accompanies the drug trade, local law enforcement has in fact focused primarily on street dealers, recreational drug users, and addicts (Lapidus et al., 2005). Women are increasingly ensnared in this aggressive enforcement sweep. According to the Women's Prison Association (2004), for every 1,000 females arrested in 1986, 29 women were imprisoned for drug offenses. By 2000, the number had spiked by more than 200%, to 91 women imprisoned per 1,000 female arrests. Nationally, female arrestees are imprisoned more often for drug offenses, than for any other category of offense, including property crimes, violence, and public order offenses. Similarly, the most common offense among incarcerated females in Massachusetts in 2006 was unlawful possession of a controlled substance. For males, it was armed robbery (MA Department of Correction, 2006).

Drug control policy explains much of the increased imprisonment of women, but not all. Another explanation, affecting both men and women, is the adoption of new sentencing policies steeped in retributive ideology (Mackenzie, 2001; Wool & Stemen, 2004). Beginning in the 1970's, a flurry of sentencing

reforms swept the United States. Criminal justice policy shifted from the notion of rehabilitating offenders to a policy of retribution and incapacitation (McDonald, et al., 1999). Though sentencing policy is a complex topic beyond the scope of this paper, it is sufficient to note three major changes in how the states and federal government punished criminals. First, sentencing enhancements like “three strikes and you’re out” laws were adopted.<sup>5</sup> Many of these laws were offense-specific, (e.g., targeting drug crimes); or were designed to sentence “career criminals” to long prison terms. A second reform was the adoption of sentencing guidelines and mandatory sentences that sharply curtailed judicial discretion in sentencing. The impetus for these changes was a desire to reduce sentencing disparities by focusing on the offense rather than the offender. This has been especially problematic for women, who often take subordinate roles in a criminal enterprise, and, therefore, are likely to own less culpability (Bush-Baskette, 2000; Daly, 1992; United Nations, 1998). Women are often involved with criminally deviant men whom they support emotionally without full knowledge of their partners’ activities (Van Wormer & Bartollas, 2002). Finally, truth-in-sentencing reforms require prisoners to serve greater portions of their sentences before being considered for parole or “good time” credits (reductions of sentence based on good behavior while in prison). Cumulatively, these strategies have led to larger prison populations (Mackenzie, 2001:16). In 2002, the Massachusetts Sentencing Commission conducted a study to examine sentencing practices after the

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<sup>5</sup> After a third felony conviction, even for a relatively minor property crime, offenders could be given up to a life sentence. California has the most sweeping “three strikes” law. For a detailed policy analysis, see *A Primer: Three Strikes – The Impact After More than a Decade*, [www.lao.ca.gov](http://www.lao.ca.gov) (2005).

implementation of truth-in-sentencing reforms. Though it did not address gender variations, the study found that inmates sentenced to Houses of Correction served longer sentences as a result of the new laws. The average expected maximum time to serve prior to the reforms was 6.2 months. Under the new law, it increased to 7 months (MA Sentencing Commission, 2000).

The trend data give a macroscopic view of female offenders in terms of growth rates and types of offense. The picture is a stark contrast to the public's perception that prison beds are reserved for society's most dangerous offenders (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Roberts, 1992). In fact, the outlook for convicted women is bleak. Legions of non-violent female offenders are being labeled as criminals and warehoused in prisons far from their families. This is happening in the face of a growing consensus among criminologists that current sentencing policies have not produced their intended effects, i.e., fewer prisoners and lower crime rates (Blumstein, 1998; Clear 2003; Zimring & Hawkins, 1997). Stemen (2007) points to diminishing returns from current incarceration policies. In a report that examined the literature on the relationship between crime and incarceration, Stemen found that a 10% increase in imprisonment is associated with a 3% drop in crime.<sup>6</sup> He concludes that government should move away from its heavy reliance on prisons and seek alternative measures that place resources in non-criminal justice areas, such as employment, literacy, and poverty elimination (Ibid.). These areas are particularly important to female offenders, most of whom

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<sup>6</sup> Stemen's report examined studies that measured crime rates in the categories of violent, property, and index crimes. The FBI defines index crimes as homicide, forcible rape, robbery aggravated assault, burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. This categorization is used when compiling national crime rate data.

are single mothers whose crimes are often economically motivated (Davies, 1997).

### *Characteristics of Female Inmates*

Much of the demographic and psychological/social data on female offenders come from the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Its annual tabulations tell us with some consistency who the female offender is. The typical woman serving a criminal sentence in the United States is non-white, 33 years old, single, and the mother of at least two children under 18. Just over half of these women have completed high school. Only 4 in 10 report having been employed fulltime prior to their arrests (Greenfeld & Snell, 2000). Female inmates report higher usage of substances than male inmates, except alcohol. Additionally, at the time of their offenses, 40% of female offenders report being under the influence of drugs, compared to 32% of males (Greenfeld & Snell, rev. 2000).

Trauma is a prominent feature of the female offender population, with prevalence rates much higher than in the general population.<sup>7</sup> In a “selected findings” report issued by the U.S. Department of Justice in 1999, rates of prior physical and sexual victimization of prison inmates and probationers were tabulated. “Just under half of the women in correctional populations and a tenth of the men indicated past abuse” (Harlow, 1999:1). In addition, the report found that 23% to 37% of all female offenders, ranging from probationers to those

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<sup>7</sup> To put these numbers in context, Gorey and Leslie (1997) reviewed sixteen studies and found that 12% to 17% of women in the general population were sexually abused before the age of 16. A more recent study found that 16% of boys and 25% of girls were sexually abused before the age of 16 (Dube, et. al., 2005). It is acknowledged that measuring the prevalence of abuse is difficult because researchers use varying definitions of “abuse.”

imprisoned in state and federal facilities, had been physically or sexually abused before age 18, compared to 6% to 14% of their male counterparts. These surveys suggest a strong correlation between sexual abuse and imprisonment of females.

Given the prevalence of victimization, much of it occurring during childhood, it is not surprising that the female inmate population experiences high rates of mental illness and psychiatric disorders. As noted trauma specialist Judith Herman states, “repeated trauma in childhood forms and deforms the personality” (Herman, 1992: 96). Teplin, et al., (1996) examined the prevalence of psychiatric disorders in a sample of approximately 1,200 female detainees, and found that over 80% met the criteria for a psychiatric diagnosis ranging from mild to severe. An earlier study conducted at a large Midwestern jail (Abram & Teplin, 1991) reported that 15% of female and 7% of male admissions were diagnosed with serious mental illness. When the researchers measured the prevalence of a co-occurring substance use disorder, the rate was 72% among both male and female detainees. It appears that jails have become the institutions of last resort for individuals suffering from trauma, mental illness, and addiction. As a result, a “triple stigma” (Hartwell, 2004) is created – addict, offender, and mentally ill individual. These elements add a new twist to the justice system’s focus on “three strikes and you’re out.”

Physical health concerns are also significant. Belknap, citing Ross and Fabiano (1986), asserts that incarcerated women have poorer health than those not

incarcerated due to:

their increased likelihood of living in poverty, limited access to preventive medical care, poor nutrition, chemical dependency, and limited education on health matters (Belknap, 2001:182).

The prevalence of HIV disease among incarcerated women exemplifies this problem. The rate of confirmed cases in the female offender population eclipses that of the general population --0.51 percent and 0.08 percent respectively (Lurigio, et al., 2003). Locally, according to the Massachusetts Public Health Association, Massachusetts prisoners have the seventh highest rate of reported HIV infection in the nation, with female inmates experiencing infection rates of 4.6% compared at 2.9% for men (Wilson, 2003). By comparison, HIV rates for the general population in Massachusetts are 1.2% for females and 2.5% for males (Walensky, et al., 2005). An explanation offered for this difference is that intimate partner abuse and transmission of HIV are positively related; likely due to lack of condom use (Hathaway, et al., 2000). Additionally, HIV is accompanied by an array of other conditions such as hepatitis C, intravenous drug use, and sexually transmitted disease making their medical needs even more complex (Centers for Disease Control, 2007).

Massachusetts is considered one of the least punitive states when it comes to female incarceration. It ranks 49<sup>th</sup>, with a rate of 11 incarcerated women per 100,000 women, compared to the most punitive state, Oklahoma, with a rate of

129 per 100,000 women (Frost, 2006). Despite its ranking, however, Massachusetts resembles the rest of the nation in the demography of its female prison population. The mean age of a female prisoner is 31; 55% report having been abused as an adult; 90% report addictions to one or more substances; just over half claim to have been employed in the past year; and an overwhelming majority (84%) are mothers of at least 2 children under the age of 18. Just over half of Massachusetts female prisoners have a high school diploma or GED (Fundamental Fairness, 2000). Though mental health data on female offenders is not readily available, a National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) report stated that over 20% of the inmate population (male and female) in Massachusetts suffers from a serious mental disorder (NAMI, 2004).

Clearly, American prisons house female offenders with profound needs and challenges, ranging from complex physical and mental health issues to profound deficits in education and job skills. Effective interventions are needed to assist offenders improve their lives. Without them, female offenders are doomed to failure.

### *Female Offenders and Recidivism*

The criminal justice system has multiple and often competing goals, from punishment and deterrence to rehabilitation and reintegration. The most common measure of the system's success is rather crude – recidivism – determining the rate and extent of re-offending. One pitfall of this measure is the inconsistency

with which it is operationalized. Studies vary in their follow-up periods, often ranging from six months to three years. Additionally, evaluators use a variety of criteria – rearrest, conviction, incarceration, incarceration for 30 days or more, etc. to define recidivism. Despite this variability, however, “recidivism rates are meaningful overall measures of the system’s performance in protecting public safety” (DiIulio, 1993).

The most recent recidivism report at the federal level is from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2002). The report examined 272,111 prisoners from 15 states who were released in 1994. Recidivism was operationalized using four measures – “rearrest, reconviction, resentence to prison, and return to prison with or without a new sentence” (BJS, 1994: 1). The follow-up period was three years. A gendered profile of the study indicates that females were 8.7% of the total number of released inmates, and that men had higher rates of recidivism in each definitional category as seen in the table below:

***Table 1.3 - Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994***

	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
<b>Rearrested</b>	68.4%	57.6%
<b>Reconvicted</b>	47.6%	39.9%
<b>Resentenced to prison for a new crime</b>	26.2%	17.3%
<b>Returned to prison with or without a new sentence</b>	53%	39.4%

Source: *Bureau of Criminal Justice Statistics (2002)*

Five years later, Deschenes, et al., (2007) conducted a secondary analysis of the 1994 recidivism data closely examining recidivism among the subset of female prisoners. The purpose of the study was to better understand “the specifics of female recidivism [because it] provides a foundation for studying their criminal careers and may provide insight into effective reentry policy and programs” (Ibid: 1). Many of the study’s findings are consistent with the earlier literature. Women generally commit nonviolent crimes, which can be tied to their emotional and economic struggles (Brown, 2003; O’Brien, 2001; Owen & Covington, 2001; Richie, 2001). One of the more thought-provoking findings is that female criminality presents a higher risk for reincarceration and a lower risk to public safety. Stated another way, women recidivists commit low level crimes and technical violations. The authors suggest that community supervision programs for female offenders, such as parole, should place a greater emphasis on treatment and services rather than surveillance and supervision, given their lower levels of dangerousness, coupled with their serious economic and social deprivations.

The Massachusetts Sentencing Commission was required by the State Legislature to report on offender recidivism in 2002. The study consisted of a one-year follow up of over 3,700 offenders completing sentences from drug courts, day reporting centers, houses of correction, and state prisons, or completing parole. The sample was comprised of offenders released and program participants discharged (regardless of offense) between April 2000 and June 2000.

Since the study measured prisoner and probationer reoffending, “recidivist” was defined in slightly different ways for each cohort. For prisoners, recidivism was defined as a new arrest or new incarceration in the year following *release* from a correctional facility. For probationers, it was defined as a new arrest or new incarceration in the year following *entry* into a community-base sanction, such as drug court. Given this definition, “the one year recidivism rate was estimated to be 49.1% for all samples” (Mulligan, 2002: v). Controlling for gender, the results indicate a slightly lower rate of recidivism for women than men. The study did not discuss significant differences, if any, among and between the cohorts. Therefore, I conducted a one-tailed z-test and found no significant differences in rates of recidivism related to gender or sanction type.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, women discharged from state prison had the lowest rate of recidivism, lower than those who participated in drug court programs or mixed-gender day reporting centers (Mulligan, 2002). However, the female state prison cohort is too small (n = 4) to draw any conclusions about the differences within this inmate population. Table 1.4 shows recidivism rates by gender and type of sanction.

***Table 1.4 – Recidivism Rates by Gender and Type of Sanction in Massachusetts***

	<b>House of Correction Discharges</b>	<b>Drug Courts</b>	<b>Community Correction Centers</b>	<b>State Prison Discharges</b>
<b>Female</b>	48.3% (125)	47.8% (11)	40.5% (15)	28.6% (4)
<b>Male</b>	52% (1,031)	50.9% (27)	53.5% (153)	36.7% (117)
<b>Total</b>	51.5%(1,156)	50% (38)	52% (168)	36.3% (121)

Source: *Comprehensive Recidivism Study* (2002), Massachusetts Sentencing Commission

<sup>8</sup> This test is used to measure differences in proportions.

The study was robust in data collection techniques, but its authors acknowledged limitations resulting from the inability to randomly assign offenders to the varying cohorts.

A study conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Correction (1990) showed an important trend in recidivism.<sup>9</sup> In a report entitled, *The Effect of Community Reintegration on Rates of Recidivism: A Statistical Overview of Data for the Years 1971 Through 1987*, LeClair (1990) found that reduced recidivism rates are positively correlated with inmate participation in community release programs such as home furloughs and pre-release placements, even after controlling for selection factors in the assignment of inmates into these programs. Though the women's prison was included in the study, there was no explicit discussion of gender differences and recidivism. However, LeClair's work speaks to the power of sound community connections in helping to rehabilitate offenders. LeClair's findings do not square with the findings associated with Massachusetts' community correction centers, whose recidivism rate for males is the highest among all four cohorts. One explanation for this might be that at the time of the Mulligan study, the community correction centers, an innovative correctional model, had been operating for less than two years (Mulligan, 2002) and likely experiencing adjustment effects.

The relation of gender to recidivism is unclear. The federal study showed

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<sup>9</sup> Though the study is quite dated, I chose to include it in the literature review because it is one of the few explanatory studies of recidivism in Massachusetts.

that male offenders recidivated at higher rates than female offenders (BJS, 1994), and the secondary analysis found that when women recidivate, they do so with relatively minor crimes as compared to men (Deschenes, et al., 2007). The Massachusetts report found recidivism rates to be similar for men and women, regardless of whether they were released from prison or sentenced to a community-based sanction (Mulligan, 2002). Yet, LeClair's analysis (1990) showed opposite results. His study points to higher recidivism rates for female offenders, along with fewer opportunities to participate in early release programs like furloughs and paroles. Taken together, these findings point to the complexities of recidivism and leave open the door for additional research. Though the results from these recidivism studies are not directly comparable to the current study due to their varying definitions and methodologies, they nonetheless provide useful background information.

#### *The Collateral Consequences of Female Incarceration*

No discussion of the female offender would be complete without some attention to her family, explicitly, her children. Most female offenders are mothers of young children, and are often their sole caretakers. Nationally, almost 70% of women under correctional supervision have children under the age of 18 (Greenfeld and Snell, rev. 2000:7). Table 1.5 illustrates the percentage of women with children by correctional sanction.

**Table 1.5 – Women with Children on Probation, in Jail, and in Prison, 1998 – United States**

	<b>Women Offenders</b>	<b>Women Offenders with Children</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Probation</b>	721,400	516,200	72%
<b>Jail</b>	63,800	44,700	70%
<b>Prison</b> (includes state and federal institutions)	84,400	54,600	62%
<b>Total</b>	869,600	615,500	68%

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Women Offenders* (rev. 2000)

Two years after the Bureau of Justice Statistics published its 2002 report on women offenders, it issued a report on the children of incarcerated parents. The data were based on personal interviews conducted over a 5-month period in 1997 as part of the United States Census Bureau's survey of inmates. In the ensuing special report entitled *Incarcerated Parents and Their Children*, Mumola (2000) points out that the number of minor children (n=126,100) with a mother in prison nearly doubled (up 98%) from 1991 to 1999, while the number of children (n=1,372,700) with a father in prison grew by 58% during the same period. Additionally, mothers in prison (65%) were more likely than fathers (42%) to report living with their children prior to their arrest. One reason for this, according to the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents (CCIP), is that a large majority of incarcerated fathers either had no or limited relationships with their children.<sup>10</sup> Ninety percent of fathers in prison report that at least one of their children is in the

<sup>10</sup> CCIP reports that male prisoners often have children by two or more women and these relationships are emotionally strained and further exacerbated by poverty, substance dependency and domestic violence. See [www.e-ccip.org/journal.html](http://www.e-ccip.org/journal.html).

care of the child's mother, compared to 28% of the mothers who reported that one of their children is in the care of the child's father. Mumola also found that 10% of mothers and 2% of fathers in prison reported a child in foster care.

A key collateral consequence of women's incarceration is that children are left behind -- some of them functionally orphaned (Norman, in Gabel & Johnston, 1995), others left with an aging caretaker, often a maternal grandmother (Baunach, 1984; Bloom & Steinhart, 1993; Hairston, 1990), and most financially marginalized (Travis, 2005). The immediate results of parental imprisonment are children's stigmatization (Hagan and Myers, 2003), declining performance in schools, disruptions in sleep patterns, and regressions in developmental milestones (Poehlman, 2005). These conditions are found more frequently with children of female offenders than male offenders, because women are more likely to have children under the age of 18 living with them prior to their imprisonment.

Intergenerational patterns of criminal behavior are a long term impact of parental separation through incarceration (Travis et al., 2003). Denise Johnston, physician, co-founder, and director of the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents, has worked extensively with the children of offenders. Discussing intergenerational crime and incarceration, she explains: "Traumatized [due to parental imprisonment] children who have organized their reactive behaviors into maladaptive coping patterns are at extremely high risk for delinquency" (Gabel & Johnston, 1995: 80). Research supports this proposition. Bloom et al., (1994)

discovered a robust intergenerational link among women in the California prison system – 75% of them had family members who were arrested and 63% reported the imprisonment of close relatives. Rowe and Farrington (1997) found that criminal convictions are highly familial (1997). Using a complex equation, they demonstrated a matrix of relationships between and among siblings and parents, whereby 17 of 21 correlations were positively and statistically significant at the .05 level (Rowe & Farrington, 1997). We can infer from these studies that reducing female criminality would have a significant impact on intergenerational patterns of crime. A similar inference can be drawn about male criminality, but the fact remains that many more female prisoners than male are the sole and primary caretakers of their children.

Other gendered consequences that are especially challenging for women stem from two major pieces of federal legislation enacted during the Clinton administration – the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) in 1997, and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) passed in 1994. ASFA speeds up the process for terminating parental rights, requiring a termination hearing, in most cases, if a child has been in foster care for 15 out of 22 months. Clearly, termination of parental rights is warranted in cases where the parent is unfit, but if the loss of parental rights is due solely to enforced separation, this imposes an extremely harsh double punishment on incarcerated mothers, and arguably, their children, as women serve an average term of 18

months in prison (Genty, 1998). PRWORA replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFCD), an open-ended federal entitlement program, with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), a block grant program allowing states to provide cash assistance to the poor only under strict time limitations. TANF restricts food stamps and cash benefits to persons convicted of felony drug offenses. In 2003, 29% of female prisoners were serving sentences for drug offenses compared to 19% of male prisoners (Harrison and Beck, 2005). At the request of the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) assessed the impacts of the denial of TANF benefits to drug offenders (2005), in light of recent federal initiatives intended to ease prisoner reentry. The GAO found that “the effects of the bans disproportionately fall on female offenders. This is because they are more likely to be custodial parents with low incomes and thus otherwise eligible for the benefits” (:22). Taken together, these gendered collateral effects serve to further marginalize a vulnerable population.

#### *Feminist Perspectives on Female Crime*

Until the 1970's, scholarship on females and crime was almost non-existent. Women in the criminal justice system were either ignored, or discarded as uninteresting in constructing theories of crime (Belknap, 2007). This is understandable, since women comprised only a small proportion of the criminal population. But the growth of the female prisoner population caught the attention

of a new generation of feminist scholars and ignited feminist thought about the appropriate treatment of women under correctional supervision. Much of this scholarly work contributes to gender-specific approaches to the delivery of correctional programming. These feminist scholars argue that male and female offenders are qualitatively different in such major areas as types of offending, histories of victimization, drug use, job skills, parental responsibilities, and mental health. As a result, they argue, female offenders cannot be managed in the same ways as male offenders. This discourse sparked public policy interest in the female offender. Correctional practitioners faced increased demands on resources as they attempted to manage a burgeoning female prisoner population. In 1999, the National Institute of Corrections initiated a three-year project to “create a foundational body of work on gender-relevant approaches to managing and intervening effectively with women offenders in adult corrections” (Bloom, et.al., 2003:iii). Project staff put forth an ambitious effort to build a foundation of knowledge to inform gender-appropriate policy and practice. They reviewed literature across several disciplines, such as family violence, health, education, and employment. They conducted more than forty individual interviews and focus groups across the country with key informants to include women offenders at each phase of the criminal justice system, line staff, and policymakers. The project staff also reviewed academic research, government reports, and institutional regulations relevant to women offenders. In 2003, as a result of this

comprehensive undertaking, Bloom, et. al. concluded that a multidisciplinary approach toward convicted women known as the “guiding principles of gender-specific programming” could lead to better outcomes for female offenders. These principles are:

1. Gender – A program’s philosophy should acknowledge that gender makes a difference.
2. Environment – The physical environment must be based on safety and respect, free from violent and/or sexual materials.
3. Relationships – Programming design should promote healthy connections to children, family, and the community.
4. Services and supervision – Treatment services should address trauma, substance use, and mental health.
5. Socio-economic status – Programs must consider self-sufficiency and provide women with meaningful employment opportunities.
6. Community – Women have multiple and complex needs therefore agencies should establish re-entry models that embrace collaboration and coordination of services.

These guidelines describe orientations that do not occur naturally in correctional environments. For example, correctional environments are often hostile to families, and they sometimes subject women to revictimization through staff sexual misconduct. They take a “one size fits all” approach to programming with the unattached male as the norm. Bloom’s gender specific approach is multifaceted, and involves the applied integration of several theoretical frameworks -- pathways, trauma, addiction, and relational, based on current

knowledge of the characteristics of the female offender (Sydney, 2005). These theories are each discussed in more detail below.

### Pathways Theory

Five feminist scholars have contributed the bulk of the pathways literature. Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez (1983), in their study of female prisoners in Hawaii's institution for women, found that 10 of the 16 women with whom they conducted in-depth interviews experienced extreme child abuse that resulted in their running away from home. The women turned to drug use, prostitution, and petty theft to survive on the streets. Cathy Spatz Widom (1989) found a related pattern in her landmark child abuse study,. She examined juvenile and adult arrest records of 908 subjects with substantiated histories of childhood abuse and a comparison group of 667 children without official records of abuse. She found that the odds of future delinquency and adult criminality increased by 29% among those abused as children.

Using different research designs, Daly (1992) and Richie (1996) found remarkably similar trajectories into law breaking among women. Daly examined 40 pre-sentence investigation reports and transcripts of comments made at the time of sentencing. She was able to classify women's trajectories into crime into five discrete categories: *Harmed-and-Harming Women* – these women had childhood histories of abuse and neglect and acted out violently as children and adolescents; and some showed signs of psychological dysfunction. *Battered*

*Women* – these criminal defendants were in relationships with violent men or had recently ended those relationships. Were it not for those relationships, they would likely have avoided judicial involvement. Daly's interviews revealed that the women in this category had been steadily employed until the time of their arrests, and either lacked criminal records or had only minor ones. *Street Women* were runaways fleeing abusive environments; and they turned to criminal activity such as prostitution, drug use, and theft as survival mechanisms. *Drug-connected Women* were addicted to drugs or sold drugs within the context of a relationship, such as with a boyfriend. The last category, described as *Other*, included women engaged in property crime motivated by economic need or greed.

Beth Richie (1996) conducted life history interviews<sup>11</sup> with 26 incarcerated, battered African American women and found six pathways to their criminal behavior, five of which are consistent with Daly's findings – addicted (drug connected) women, fighting back (battered women), poverty (other), sexual exploitation (street women), projection and association (harmed-and-harming women). Richie's last category – women held hostage – included women whose intimate partners used violence or the threat of violence to keep them isolated from the outside world.

The pathways literature offered one of the earliest glimpses into the ways that women's experiences with the law differ from those of men. For men, the scholarship pointed to associations with delinquent peers (Sutherland & Cressey,

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<sup>11</sup> Life histories are in-depth interviews in which subjects are asked to recall their pasts (Babbie, 2005).

1960), the strain of failing to reach culturally-accepted goals (Merton, 1938), and poor self-control (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990) as explanations for deviant behavior. These paradigms are, arguably, useless in understanding the criminal behavior of women. Most importantly, the research designs either excluded females outright or discounted their experiences in not so subtle ways. For example, in her book *The Invisible Woman: Gender, Crime, and Justice*, feminist scholar Joanne Belknap discusses how females are represented in Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) differential opportunity theory of crime. "Boys were viewed as having legitimate struggles to attain the American Dream, whereas girls encounter only frivolous concerns, such as finding boyfriends" (41). Even the more recent scholarship, such as Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) *A General Theory of Crime*, (that purports crime is a matter of poor self control) ignores gender differences. The authors define crime as "acts of force or fraud undertaken in self-interest" (15). This theory loses steam as an explanation of female crime in two important ways. First, impulsivity and risk-taking behaviors that drive poor self control are notably male characteristics (Johnson, 2007). Second, the term, "acts of force" refer to violent crime. The gender differentials in the commission of violent crime have been and continue to be substantial in that males commit the bulk of it (Vito, et. al., 2007; Krakowski & Czobor, 2004; OJJDP, 2002).

### Trauma Theory

As previously noted, the female offender population experiences high rates of trauma. The psychiatric definition of trauma refers to “extreme stress that overwhelms a person’s ability to cope” (Giller, 1999), but it tells us little about trauma’s lingering effects. Dr. Judith Herman (1992), in her classic book *Trauma and Recovery*, describes trauma’s pervasive psychic injury: “Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships;” and “destroy victims’ fundamental assumptions about the safety of the world, the positive value of the self, and the meaningful order of creation” (:51). Conservative estimates indicate that half of all women under correctional supervision are trauma victims. In the present study, 64% of the sample reported histories of abuse and victimization. Clearly, victimization is a salient risk factor associated with women’s criminal behavior (DeHart, 2005; McClellan, 1997; Widom, 1994). Given the prevalence of trauma in the female offender population, it is understandable that “trauma-informed” programming for female offenders would be championed by correctional reformers and advocates of gender-specific services. Many of the features of this type of programming are consistent with Bloom et al.’s (2003) gender-specific guiding principles including: acknowledging that trauma is a reality in many women’s lives; employing an empowerment model in which goals are mutually and collaboratively set between treatment provider and client; and implementing the plan in an environment that is safe, respectful, and culturally competent

(Elliot, et al., 2005). This is in sharp contrast to the male model of treatment, which is confrontive and self-confession driven (Reed, 1987; Wald et al., 1995).

### Addiction Theory

Like trauma, substance use, abuse, and addiction are prevalent in the female criminal population. Thus, addiction theory is part of a gender-specific response to the female offender. Addiction theory sees chemical dependency as a physical disease, rather than a lapse in morals or a psychiatric disorder (Covington, 2002). However, a physical disease might require lifestyle changes. Therefore, the treatment is multifaceted. Covington (2002: 55) describes how addiction theory should be applied within a correctional context:

Though some women may have a genetic predisposition to addiction, it is important in treatment to acknowledge that many of them have grown up in environments in which drug dealing and addiction are ways of life. When addiction has been a core part of the multiple aspects of a woman's life, the treatment process requires a holistic multidimensional approach.

A commonly-used holistic approach to addiction is the therapeutic community (TC). This is an in-patient treatment program set up as a community consisting of staff and peer participants who work together as members of a "family" to create an environment promoting prosocial values and facilitating recovery from addiction (DeLeon, 1995). One feature of the TC is public confrontation, used to hold community members accountable for negative, regressive behaviors (Inciardi

et al., 2000). In analyzing female offender perceptions of treatment delivered in a prison therapeutic community, McCorkel et al., (1998) note that this component can feel like a personal attack, causing some participants to drop out of the TC program. They quote one client as saying:

They just doing the same things my family did to me to get me here. I guess that's why they call themselves a family. They beat you up, call you names, spit on you just like a family. How much more breaking down [degradation] do I need? Shit, I've been broken down my whole life – what they's doing to me isn't going to help. (: 50).

Though the model has been successfully adapted to criminal justice settings, the above quote strongly suggests the model requires modification or elimination of the use of confrontation when used with female offenders, especially those with histories of childhood abuse. In fact, in a literature review examining the efficacy of TCs, Michele Eliason (2006) questions whether this model has any therapeutic value at all for women. She notes that TCs are compatible with the treatment needs of men in prison, who are likely to have anti-social personality disorders and can benefit from confrontational, highly-structured programming. Conversely, she points out that this approach may trigger post traumatic stress symptoms in women offenders and may be harmful to their recovery.

### Relational Theory

The gist of relational theory is contained in Miller's often quoted assertion that "women's sense of personhood is grounded in the motivation to make and

enhance relatedness to others...women tend to find satisfaction, pleasure, effectiveness, and a sense of worth if they experience their life activities as arising from, and leading back to, a sense of connection with others” (1976:1). Relational theory is not well represented in the criminological literature; it is viewed as a psychological theory of women’s development rather than a sociological explanation of crime. However, a nascent body of work looks at female offenders through the relational lens (Armstrong et al., 2007; Calhoun et al., 2005; Coll & Duff, 1995; Coll et al., 1997; Covington, 2002; Johnson & Young, 2002; Schaffer, 1998). Much of this work is being fueled by pathways and trauma scholarship which presents a grim view of the ruptured relational lives of women offenders. No study has yet determined whether dysfunctional relationships cause crime or are merely an aspect of the female offender’s life, but we do know that much of the literature points to the importance of relationships in the lives of female offenders (Calhoun et al., 2005; Camp & Sandhu, 1995; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Owen, 1998; Pollock, 1998), making this area fertile ground for further study.

To appreciate the role relational theory might play in understanding the female offender, it is necessary to consider it as a general theory of female psychological development. Traditional (i.e. non-feminist) theories of human development advanced by Freud (1933), Erickson (1950), and Kohlberg (1969) posited that individuals mature in stages marked by separation and autonomy,

e.g., a child's separation from its primary caregiver. Psychiatrist Jean Baker Miller (1991) challenged these assumptions. In her clinical practice she repeatedly heard her female patients speak despairingly of their emotionality and dependence on others. They viewed the centrality of relationships in their lives as a pathology. Miller reframed these perceived weaknesses as strengths. She observed:

It seems apparent that the human condition is to grow and live in groups. That is, human beings can develop only with relationships with other people.... (:3).

Accepting Miller's premise that relationship and connection feed the psychological health and development of individuals, we can begin to imagine the profound emotional unraveling of a victim of abuse and trauma, which are described by Miller (1988) as "disconnections and violations." Fedele and Harrington (1990), discussing Miller's work with abuse survivors, say:

Extreme distortions or deficits in their relational world have left the women alienated from their needs and unable to voice them. Depression, anxiety, suicidality, eating disorders, substance abuse, and other problems can then result (Ibid: 2).

This observation aptly describes the lives of female offenders who have suffered traumatic abuse. Yet healing, resiliency, and recovery are possible. Judith Jordan, one of Miller's original collaborators, states:

In abuse there is profound disconnection, a violation of human relatedness and meaningfulness in a relationship that cuts deep. Finding ways to reestablish the caring connection or the belief in

the possibility of love as a response to vulnerability is essential.

It is plausible, then, that correctional programs that promote relational healing might reduce criminal offending. If criminal behavior is a maladaptive coping response to the profound disconnection and violation in the relational lives of female offenders, relational theory may have a great deal to offer. In fact, a strength of relational theory as it related to female offenders, is that it appears to encompass many of the main ideas of the previously-discussed theories -- pathways, trauma, and addiction theories, specifically, that relationships matter.

It is important to clarify the distinctions between relational needs and social bonding. Social bonding, a sociological construct, asserts that an individual's attachment to normative institutions like marriage, education, and schooling inhibits the expression of criminal behavior (Hirschi, 1969). Hirschi's work largely explains how delinquent boys become law-abiding men; he omits any meaningful discussion of girls (Belknap, 2007). One plausible explanation for this omission is that girls tend to be more socially conforming than boys (Broidy & Agnew, 1997; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 1998) making social bonding theory less relevant to understanding the criminal inhibitions that may influence girls. However, in assessing the effects of social bonds on adult probationers, Li and MacKenzie (2003) found a striking gender effect. While social bonds reduced male offending, they actually increased crime

among the women in the sample! The authors hypothesize that “the stigmas and discrimination caused by female crime leave many female offenders with few options other than continuing to be involved with deviant individuals” (Li & MacKenzie, 2003: 295). Applying relational theory, a psychological construct, to the concept of social bonds can help us understand this gendered effect. Miller (1976) posits that “women’s sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliations and relationships. Eventually, for many women the threat of and/or disruption of connections is perceived not as just a loss of a relationship but as something closer to a total loss of self” (Ibid: 83). Synthesizing these two ideas suggests that stigmatized women may seek out and maintain unhealthy connections that could reinforce criminal behavior, rather than inhibiting it. A female offender might reason that a bad connection is better than no connection.

#### *Female Offenders, Correctional Programming, and Relationship*

Prisons have a long tradition of isolation and disconnection -- from family, friends, employment, education, and society. The early 1800’s saw the rise of the *penitentiary* – a new type of institution inspired by the Quakers where prisoners would be placed in solitary confinement so that they might experience *penitence* by reflecting on the evils of their crimes (Reed, 1983). The ideological origins of punishment and reformation present a significant challenge to those seeking to meet the relational needs of female prisoners. Prisons are simply *not supposed* to

be relational. In fact, they are the antithesis of relationship. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the lack of relationally-based programming for women offenders.

To avoid appearing “soft” on criminals, modern American correctional institutions have adopted military-style boot camps, designed to instill regimented discipline. The assumption is that this programming will increase self-esteem and, thus, reduce recidivism. This design also fits comfortably into the rigid structure of a correctional facility, since prisons are paramilitary organizations. However, boot camps have repeatedly been shown to be ineffective (MacKenzie & Parent, 1992; Dickey, 1994).

Therapeutic communities are another popular program design. These are highly structured substance abuse recovery programs that use the confrontational approach which has been shown to be ineffective with individuals with histories of trauma and abuse (NIC, 1994). They show mixed results on recidivism rates for female offenders. (Farrell, 2000).

Work release centers and treatment-based halfway houses show some of the best results. In a review of 32 prisoner reentry program evaluations, Seiter and Kadela (2003) evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of each research design using the Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods (MSSM). The instrument allowed the researchers to rank each project from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) in terms of scientific rigor. For studies meeting two criteria – ranked at level 3 or above and with significance tests indicating that the intervention was effective, the

investigators could determine that the reentry program was, in fact, “working.” What they found to be effective were work release programs and intensive drug treatment programs with aftercare. Paradoxically, harsh sentencing policies have seen their numbers diminish despite evidence that suggests they effect reductions in recidivism (Ibid.).

In sum, the current correctional environment may be an unsuitable catalyst for change in female offenders. Their relational needs do not disappear at the prison gate. This might explain a phenomenon called “play families” – defined by Propper (1982) as “female inmates getting together and pretending to be mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, fathers, brothers, and sons.” Research has uncovered prison subcultures with unique sets of values, norms, and mores (Clemmer, 1938; Gialombardo, 1966). For males, it is a culture of toughness, loyalty, and isolation. For females it is quite different – it is an imitation of family roles, and it may be a response to intensified relational needs resulting from the loss female inmates experience in being separated from their children (Schaffer, 2004). Women try to maintain relational structures in a prison environment that , in some ways, are designed to extinguish relationships.

In 1995, Cynthia Coll and Kathleen Duff conducted a study designed to assess the programmatic needs of female prisoners in a medium security prison in the northeastern United States. When they asked female prisoners, “What do you think are the three most important needs of women in prison to be considered in

developing programming and treatment?” (12), they identified as the second most important, “meaningful connections.” The first need identified was educational services and/or job skills. The researchers assert, however, that these needs are interrelated:

Women at risk have great difficulty accessing new job skills, maintaining jobs, a home, economic stability, substance-free lives, and crime-free lifestyles without integrating emotional support and an understanding of the cultural and relational contexts in which they grow, develop, and change (14).

Coll and Duff’s assertion highlights the critical role that healthy relationships play not only in the intimate, everyday lives of newly-released female offenders, but also as a mitigating factor against the structural barriers facing all offenders returning to the community, in terms of employment opportunities, welfare benefits, and access to affordable day care.<sup>12</sup>

Two years later, Coll et al., (1997), after conducting focus groups and administering questionnaires to 54 female inmates in a minimum security facility in the same state as their previous study, found that one of the recurring themes the inmates raised was *respect from correctional officers* (15). Coll et al., state that, “Inmates reported that being respected as people with dignity was one of the most important components for survival in prison” (Ibid). Both of these studies strongly suggest the importance of relationship as a motivator for change in the

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<sup>12</sup> For a richly detailed account of how neighborhood and family networks contribute to the survival of those living in poverty, see Carol B. Stack’s (1997) classic work, *All Our Kin*.

lives of female prisoners.

In a recidivism study of a boot camp for female offenders in Oklahoma, Camp and Sandhu (1995) found that the risk of recidivism was related to seeking relationships that ultimately proved to be unhealthy. In discussing the observations of parole and probation officers who supervised some of the boot camp graduates, the authors noted, “These women desperately sought affection, and in their effort to get affection, [they] fell for many undesirable characters” (56) who ultimately played a role in reintroducing them to selling and using drugs.

The literature establishes that female teenage runaways often leave their homes to escape abuse and neglect (Thompson & Pillai, 2006; Whitbeck & Simons, 1990; Van de Pleog, 1989). One researcher looked more deeply at this phenomenon and found that in her sample of 26 runaways in a rural New England shelter, running away was not based on the desire to break from family. It was driven instead by a need to find love and protection elsewhere. In fact, running away was a search for meaningful connection not avoidance of it (Schaffner, 1998).

Evidence suggests that relational programming would be effective for female offenders, but this suggestion is not yet affirmed by research. Researchers in Illinois attempted to affirm this thesis and saw mixed results. Armstrong et al., (2007) evaluated Community-Based Transitional Services for Female Offenders

(CBTSFO), a program created in response to increasing convictions of women for drunk driving in Cook County, Illinois. It is unclear from the study if the increase in arrests was due to changes in police practices. However, county law enforcement, court, and social services officials believed that the treatment needs of female drunk drivers were not being met. The study examined three groups of probationers – the study sample of 608 female probationers assigned to CBTSFO, which is a rigorous, individualized supervision program for offenders convicted of Driving Under the Influence; and two comparison groups designated “diversified” (n = 924) and “intensive” (n = 951). The diversified group consisted of women with less serious offense histories than the CBTSFO study group. The intensive group has similar criminal histories as the study group but received less specialized supervision. A unique feature of the CBTSFO program is that it included a 14-week substance abuse recovery curriculum developed by Stephanie Covington. Covington is a pioneer in gender-responsive correctional strategies for female offenders, and a proponent of relational theory in correctional settings.

Covington’s model integrates three conceptual frameworks – trauma theory, addiction theory, and relational theory (2000). The structural components of the model are built on this framework in three major ways. First, the environment in which the treatment takes place must be one that facilitates healing. Covington describes such an environment as one that is free from physical and sexual harassment. Secondly, the clinical assessment focuses on

client strengths rather than deficits. For example, instead of admonishing clients not to use substances, a clinician might discuss new behaviors to replace habitual drug use. Last, the content areas of the model include topics relevant to healthy relationships such as the dynamics of interpersonal violence, child care and custody, sexuality, and health and hygiene.

Investigators in the CBTSFO study gauged program effectiveness by measuring three outcomes -- positive urinalysis test results, new arrests, and new probation violation hearings. Unexpectedly, they found that women in the CBTSFO cohort had higher failure rates in each of the three categories, despite the use of Covington's curriculum. The researchers offered several explanations for these findings. First, they acknowledged that the CBTSFO group was a higher-risk population than the other two cohorts in terms of having more serious treatment needs. Secondly, participants in the CBTSFO program were more closely monitored than those in the other programs, thus increasing the chances for violations to be detected (although an alternative argument could be made that closer supervision would deter participants from criminal activity and drug use). Third, the CBTSFO cohort had more probation conditions to contend with, which also increased the likelihood of non-compliance. Oddly, though the impetus for the CBTSFO program was to provide treatment to an underserved population, only 159 women out of 608 were ordered to participate in the 14-week Covington substance abuse recovery program as one of their CBTSFO conditions. This

leaves open the question: if more women attended the Covington program, would the recidivism results been different?

In conclusion, we know that female offenders are the fastest growing segment of the prison population, though there is little evidence of their increasing violence or dangerousness. The female offender serves her time in the oppressive confines of an institution deemed by some a “regressive intervention” (Hawk, 1994), one that appears to do more harm than good in preparing women for release when considering the harsh realities of reentry such as exclusionary entitlement programs, unforgiving employers, and punitive child welfare policies.

Additionally, the female offender enters a system with a complex set of needs and deficits born of abuse and trauma. Yet, much of the evidence points to a system that is not only ill-equipped to address these needs, but may, in fact, run counter to them in terms of building healthy relationships. The female offender is also a mother, and her incarceration has powerful repercussions for children’s future.

Traditional criminological theory fails to account for the varied experiences of marginalized, criminal women. It ignores the psychological, cultural, and political aspects of gender – a glaring oversight because females constitute half of the world’s population. Relational theory fills this void and may best explain female offending. It considers gender differences as valid and meaningful. Its founder, Jean Baker Miller, based its development by listening to

the real-world experiences of women. The foundation of the theory -- the centrality of relationships to women's psychological development, is found in other conceptual frameworks that have guided the development of gender-specificity in correctional programs since the early 2000's.

At a time when women are going to prison in record numbers, relational theory stands ready in its application to the evaluation of female offender programs. The *Women in Transition* program is a fitting model to test the ideas put forth Jean Baker Miller and others in relational theory.

## Chapter 2 – Research Methodology: The Ways of Knowing the *Women in Transition* Program

This chapter discusses the design of the study and the data collection process. In addition, it introduces the study site and describes the security and programming elements of the *Women in Transition* program. Lastly, I describe the analytic framework and explain how the structure of the scientific inquiry is suited to the research questions posed.

The research method used in this study is impact evaluation research.<sup>13</sup> Impact evaluations offer policymakers guidance in designing and implementing programs. This study addresses the question – does the program work? In other words, are most of the *WIT* participants over the four-year study period recidivists or non-recidivists?

A major component of the research design is its use of relational theory to guide my explanation of not only *how* the *WIT* program works, and but also *how well* it delivers its services. Thus, the design is structured to answer three broad questions. The first question is related to the stated goal of the program, i.e. reducing recidivism, and the other two questions are geared toward theory testing as a way to inform criminal justice policy:

1. Is the *Women in Transition (WIT)* program in Massachusetts meeting its intended goal of reducing participants' rates of reoffending?

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<sup>13</sup> An impact evaluation is a type of applied research that assesses whether a program is meeting its intended goals or not (Maxfield & Babbie, 2005).

2. Does the program help to meet the relational needs of its participants?
3. Do healthy relationships ultimately reduce recidivism?

The study uses a mixed model, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The value of this design is that it provides a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study. Converting social information into numerical form provides useful descriptive data and helps us to discern relationships between variables. However, valuable detail is lost in this process, which may produce an oversimplified understanding of the phenomenon. Qualitative analysis introduces detail and context. “Although some researchers make one mode primary and the other supplementary, other researchers basically view the research paradigms as complementary. Each adds something essential to the ultimate findings” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 28). A mixed method provides us with the opportunity to conduct a more comprehensive examination of the complexities of crime desistance than the use of a singular, quantitative approach.

*The Study Site – The Women in Transition Program*

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts operates a bifurcated correctional system – one portion is state-based, the other is county-based. Length of sentence guides prisoner placement in the system. When prisoners receive a sentence longer than two and a half years, they are sent to state correctional facilities to serve their time. If the sentence is two and a half years or less (i.e., a county

sentence), they are committed to a county-based House of Correction. However, most counties have no facilities for female offenders. Massachusetts has fourteen counties, but only five (5) of them operate jails and houses of correction that house women.<sup>14</sup> In the nine (9) remaining counties, women with county sentences serve their time in the women's state prison. There are only two state-run facilities for female offenders in Massachusetts – MCI-Framingham, a medium security prison, and South Middlesex Correctional Center, which is designated a minimum security institution and considered a “sister” facility to MCI-Framingham.

This system has negative implications for women prisoners in three ways. First, if a woman is a resident of the county in which she is adjudicated, (and this is likely<sup>15</sup>) she may be transferred to a facility that is a substantial distance from her home, making visitation from family and friends difficult. Second, she may serve her time alongside state prisoners who, typically, are more serious offenders, as is reflected in their longer prison sentences. The county-sentenced women are housed in a medium security facility although they may be suited for placement in a less secure setting. Third, since most counties have no facilities for women, most incarcerated women are housed at MCI- Framingham, which

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<sup>14</sup> Barnstable, Berkshire, Bristol, Hampden, and Suffolk Counties house county-sentenced female offenders, while Berkshire, Dukes, Essex, Hampshire, Middlesex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Plymouth, and Worcester do not.

<sup>15</sup> According to the Massachusetts Department of Correction Report, *2006 County Commitments*, almost all of the prisoners who enter the state and county correction system reside in the counties where they were adjudicated.

contributes to its chronically overcrowded state.<sup>16</sup> Crowded conditions make control and supervision more difficult, and intensify the stressful effects of imprisonment. This can lead to higher rates of assault, suicide, and physical illness (Pollock, 1997).

Unlike MCI-Framingham, the *Women in Transition (WIT)* Program is a county-run facility. It is the creation of Essex County Sheriff Frank Cousins, who opened the program in December 2000. On the Essex County Sheriff's Department website ([www.ecsd.org](http://www.ecsd.org)) Sheriff Cousins lays out the mission of his department, which is to protect the residents of Essex County from criminal offenders – a noble goal for any criminal justice agency. While there may be many ways to achieve this goal, Sheriff Cousins' philosophy clearly encompasses both incapacitation and treatment. The website notes that this protective goal is to be achieved by “housing inmates in a secure and fair manner, and providing rehabilitation and academic training to offenders while they are incarcerated, so they will not repeat their mistakes once they are released.” ([www.ecsd.org](http://www.ecsd.org)).

Sheriff Cousins wanted to give female offenders the opportunity to serve a portion of their sentences in a community-based minimum security facility designed for offenders with less dangerous criminal histories than those committed to state custody. He believes that female offenders in Essex County deserve a sentencing alternative that keeps them physically closer to their communities and facilitates their reentry while maintaining family bonds. The

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<sup>16</sup> According to the *Report of the Governor's Commission on Corrections Reform* (Harshbarger, 2004), MCI-Framingham is designed to house 388 women but currently holds over 600.

Sheriff envisioned a “treatment-based facility for female offenders to provide them with the opportunity to move forward with their lives and reclaim their self-worth” (Dube, 2006:3).

Essex County is situated 25 miles north of the Boston/Cambridge metropolitan area. It includes 500 square miles and has a population of approximately 739,000 (US Census, 2000). The population is predominantly white (83%), with Latino (11%), Asian (2.4%), and Black (1.9%) minorities. The median household income is \$52,050, just 3% below the state median. The Uniform Crime Reports for Metropolitan Statistical Areas (2006) indicate that the violent crime rate per 100,000 in Essex County is 393, while the property crime rate is 2101.7. These rates are 14% and 11% lower than the statewide rates of violent and property crime.

The *Women in Transition* facility is a one-story, single building located along a major thoroughfare lined with restaurants, gas stations, and other commercial/retail businesses. The center houses up to twenty-four (24) women, and enjoys a high staff to inmate ratio (almost 1:1); there are twenty-one employees assigned to the program. Most of the staff are uniformed officers (1 captain, 4 sergeants, and 11 officers) providing security coverage 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The uniformed staff play a unique role in the program, eloquently detailed in the 2006 *WIT* Annual Report (: 6):

It is important to note the importance of the role of the correctional

staff in maintaining an atmosphere that is conducive to treatment.

The officers have attended intensive trainings related to female offenders and must communicate effectively with program and treatment staff regarding any security/operational related issues that may affect the treatment component of the program. Through consistent and appropriate discipline, the officers have the ability to provide an atmosphere of safety so that treatment may occur more effectively.

This description evidences a team-based approach to facility management that attempts to balance the treatment of the female offender with public safety. The interplay of security and treatment is neatly summarized in the introduction to the Report: “The staff of the *WIT* program continues to be dedicated to public safety through the ongoing programming and re-entry services offered at the facility” (Ibid:3).

The remaining employees are:

- Program Director – reports directly to the Sheriff and manages the fiscal and policy aspects of the program
- Deputy Program Director – oversees daily operations of the facility
- Director of Classification – is responsible for screening inmates at MCI-Framingham for transfer into the *WIT* program
- Director of Treatment – supervises and implements treatment programming
- Reintegration Coordinator – conducts offender treatment groups and provides inmates with aftercare planning services

The Director of Classification and the Deputy Program Director make

regular trips to MCI-Framingham, often every other week, to screen Essex County inmates for suitability and eligibility for the program. Unless an inmate has a serious violent history and/or a lengthy record of rule violations, she will be considered for transfer to *WIT*. Once eligibility is established, the inmate is placed on a waiting list for transfer. All transfers are voluntary; it would be a public safety risk to transfer an unwilling participant to a program without locks on its doors. Time on the waiting list can vary from one day to three months depending on bed space, which fluctuates according to paroles granted, program terminations due to rule violations, and end-of-sentence releases.

Two treatment staff deliver an impressive array of services. Treatment groups are offered on a weekly basis. No fewer than five of them relate to substance abuse recovery. The topics range from understanding addiction to the social aspects of recovery – a workshop that explores social situations with family and friends that may create the risk of relapse.

Another set of groups focuses on healthy relationships. Some of these are centered around motherhood, one focuses on domestic violence, and one touches on the dynamics of anger. One popular group is called “Errors in Criminal/Addictive Thinking.” This group helps participants “identify, challenge, and change unhealthy thinking patterns” (Ibid: 9) common to substance abusing offenders. None of these programs were consciously designed with relational theory in mind. Rather, there was a unique appreciation of female offenders’ risks

and needs that led to the creation of a program that fits into the perspective of relational theory and crime

The treatment staff is assisted by numerous volunteers, who offer over twenty program activities, ranging from in-house AA meetings to creative writing workshops, parenting support groups, and religious services.

A typical day in the *Women in Transition* program is quite structured. Residents must have their dormitory-style rooms in order by 7:00 am. Room decorum guidelines are issued to inmates on admission, and rooms are subject to regular inspections and searches. For example, vents may not to be covered, clothing cannot be hung on bunks, and storage containers must be kept in closets. Meals are served at 6:00 am, 11:30 am, and 6:00 pm. Correctional officers conduct five formal headcounts a day: 5:00 am, 12:00 pm, 5:00 pm, 9:00 pm, and 12:00 am. All residents are assigned house chores that must be completed three times a day after each meal. Programming begins at 8:30 am and runs until 8:00 pm. This includes about 90 minutes of unstructured time for hobbies, games, and exercise. An inmate on work-release status is allowed to leave the facility and maintain fulltime employment in the community. Every Friday, work-release inmates submit weekly work schedules and itineraries. Changes in work hours or locations are reviewed and approved by the facility's Work Release Coordinator, who is a member of the uniformed staff. Random work site checks are conducted by uniformed staff to maintain offender accountability in the community.

Employed *WIT* residents contribute \$3.00 a day, up to \$15.00 a week, to the facility for room and board. All inmates, regardless of their work status, are subject to random urine tests to monitor drug and alcohol usage. The regulations are designed to ensure a safe, clean, and orderly facility. Many inmates feel proud of their surroundings, especially when visitors arrive. Visiting occurs Monday through Friday from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm, and on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays from 12:30 pm to 2:30pm, and 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Up to four visitors per inmate may visit at one time. The average length of stay in the *WIT* program is about three months.

Two noted reentry scholars, Travis and Petersilia, argue that correctional institutions must create a “seamless linkage between in-prison programs and community programs to increase the chances of successful reentry” (as quoted in Latessa and Holsinger, 2006: 350). The *WIT* program is designed to do just that. “Development of aftercare planning begins at the time the inmate arrives at the facility. Women are expected to attend weekly small group counseling sessions and actively participate in regular collaborative sessions with their reintegration worker” (Dube: 5). By the time the inmate leaves the facility, it is likely that she has created a network of community support. For example, she may have an AA sponsor, a referral to sober housing, and/or initiation of psychological counseling. Her plan may be supplemented by employment if she has been successful in finding a job in the community. In 2006, seventy women secured employment

through the work release aspect of the *WIT* program. This constitutes an employment rate of about 65%. The average hourly pay for the women on work-release was \$7.50 per hour. Though this is only \$.75 above minimum wage,<sup>17</sup> it represents an important step toward empowerment and self-sufficiency, especially given the stigma of being an offender. It is notoriously difficult for ex-offenders to find employment because of workplace regulations and employer hesitancy to hire them.<sup>18</sup>

The *Women in Transition* Program was nationally accredited in 2006 by the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections. Accreditation is a peer-review process based on professional standards designed to promote effective correctional management. ([www.aca.org](http://www.aca.org)).

Placement of offenders in medium-security prisons, such as MCI-Framingham, should not occur solely because no other options exist. It should be based on assessments of dangerousness, otherwise it represents *de facto* disparate treatment between male and female offenders in Massachusetts. *WIT* was created to fill the void in correctional options for women in Essex County. Sheriff Cousins saw a need for gender-specific correctional housing and programs that he believes can promote public safety. For this reason alone, the *Women in*

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<sup>17</sup> In July 2007, Massachusetts' minimum wage increased to \$8.00 an hour, but in 2006 it was \$6.75.

<sup>18</sup> Regulations on access to and dissemination of Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI), have undergone a legislative evolution since 1997, dramatically increasing the availability of records that were once limited to criminal justice agencies. Today, employers ranging from hospitals to insurance companies may request CORI records of prospective employees. For a fuller discussion, see the Boston Foundation's report entitled *CORI: Balancing Individual Rights and Public Access* at [www.tbf.org](http://www.tbf.org).

*Transition* program is an ideal place to examine the ideas behind relational theory and female criminal offending.

### *Analytic Framework*

Ideally, the framework for this study would include a control or comparison group. In order to gauge the effect that *WIT* has on its participants, a researcher would want to examine rates of offending in a similarly-situated group of offenders who did not go through the *WIT* program. In such a design, the investigator assigns the independent variable (*WIT* participation) to one group but withholds it from the other, and then measures the dependent variable (recidivism) in both groups. Unfortunately, my request for comparison group data is still pending; and time limits associated with this project have required me to move forward. This setback, however, has been mitigated by the use of a mixed method – quantitative and qualitative analyses. Qualitative data help us understand why some women acquire better relationships and ultimately are more successful once released. Therefore, I hypothesize that the *WIT* program facilitates “relational recovery.” By meeting the relational needs of its inmates in a prosocial manner, the program allows women to experience healthy connection – relationships infused with mutuality and empathy. Consequently, instead of reasoning that a bad relationship is better than no relationship, a *WIT* participant’s reasoning may become more nuanced, mature, and hopeful, open to possibilities for healthier connections. This could set the offender on a path to avoiding

dysfunctional relationships, and reduce her likelihood of continued criminal offending.

The statistical analysis of the study variables notes an abundance of descriptive data about the *WIT* offender population, from its inception in 2001 through 2004. A measure of program outcomes in terms of recidivism rates shows favorable results. The program's recidivism rate is lower than that of most correctional programs in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Recidivism Study (Mulligan, 2002), with a follow up period of 12 months, reported a 49.1% rate of recidivism. In comparison, *WIT*, with an even longer follow-up period (18 months), had a success rate 61%. One would expect a longer follow-up period to show a lower success rate. "The longer the period, the higher will be the incidence of recidivism" (Cavior & Cohen, 1975:248). Yet, in the present study, this was not the case. The statistical analysis also shows a predictive relationship between completion of the *WIT* program and recidivism. These are intriguing findings, especially considering the risks and challenges facing the study population, specifically high rates of substance use, psychiatric disorders, trauma histories, and low levels of education and economic self-sufficiency. This mix of factors invites further examination of the characteristics of the program. The question to be addressed is: What features of the *WIT* program explain these results and thereby advance our understanding of female offender programming? Since the statistical analysis offered little to help

understand how the population experiences the program and how the employees implement it, I turned to the qualitative method as a potential additional source of explanation.

The qualitative inquiry concentrated on two areas – a) staff attitudes and beliefs about the program, and b) inmate experiences of the program. I wanted to learn more about the employees’ perspective on the mission and efficacy of the program. The literature states that current correctional policy emphasizes punishment rather than rehabilitation (MacKenzie, 2001; Stemen, 2007; Wool & Stemen, 2004). I wanted to explore this emphasis with *WIT* staff to learn how the concepts of retribution and offender services play out in the delivery of the program. In addition, the number of minimum-security prison beds has been declining in Massachusetts (Harshbarger, 2004). In light of this, I wanted to explore why the Essex County Sheriff’s Department bucked this trend by opening a low-security program for women. I also wanted to examine the organizational philosophy that fueled the decision to create a facility that follows the guiding principles of gender-specificity.

A growing body of literature extols the virtues of gender-specific programming for female offenders (Bloom & Covington, 1998; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Covington, 2002; Dolan, et. al., 2002), but few studies have actually evaluated programs fitting this model. Further contributing to the gap in knowledge is the lack of a firm theoretical footing for the concept of gender

specificity. Covington and Bloom (1993) are the pioneers in arguing for gender-specific programs for female offenders. They offer guiding principles for gender-specificity which are helpful in designing programs, but not in testing their efficacy within a theoretical frame. This may be because the guiding principles are drawn from a variety of theoretical orientations – pathways, addiction, trauma, and relational theories (Sydney, 2005). An examination of each theory, however, reveals a common thread – the role of relationships in women’s trajectory to crime. Therefore, I focused on the notion of relationship to determine whether the *WIT* program somehow attended to the relational needs of the women it serves.

#### *Quantitative Data Collection*

Data collection occurred in two phases. The first phase consisted of reviewing approximately 400 case files from the *WIT* program. Archived case files were stored by the Essex County Sheriff’s Department in the basement of the county-run day reporting center a short distance from the facility. The files consisted of individual folders for every participant, including booking sheets, classification reports, intake forms, and work release assessments. They were largely in alphabetical order, and stored in boxes, which were organized by year.

During the first phase of the data collection, I captured demographic, psychological/social, and current sentencing data for each participant. It is important to note that these data do not exist in one neatly organized package. I had to gather information from a variety of documents in separate files and pull

together diverse information by poring over pages of archived and sometimes misfiled records.

To record the data in a systematic way, I used a case file code form which I created specifically for this purpose. See Appendix 1 – Case File Code Form. Information was transferred from the participant’s file to the form. To ensure confidentiality and to facilitate data tracking, I assigned two numbers to each form– the first one was the numerical identifier unique to that case; the other was the offender’s social security number<sup>19</sup> needed to collect criminal history information from the Criminal History Systems Board. I collected the data one to two days a week during the months of June through August, 2006.

The second phase of the data collection process involved an examination of each offender’s criminal history and recidivism status. This required a formal request to the Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board to access criminal offender record information (CORI). Dissemination of this information is limited and is granted only for legitimate research purposes or other reasons set by statute, such as victim advocacy or employment needs. After receiving approval for access, I sent the Criminal History Systems Board an Excel spreadsheet listing each offender’s name, date of birth, and social security number.<sup>20</sup> Within four weeks, I received the Board of Probation record, also known as the “rap sheet”, for each offender. Upon receipt of the criminal record documents, I redacted all

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<sup>19</sup> This number was redacted as soon as I received the participant’s Board of Probation record.

<sup>20</sup> This number was redacted as soon as I received the subject’s Board of Probation record. The Northeastern University Institutional Review Board approved the manner in which I handled this data.

identifying information, such as name and social security number, and replaced it with a numerical identifier.

Ultimately, these documents allowed me to gather information on the following variables:

*Table 2.1 – Source documents from which data was collected*

<b>Source Document</b>	<b>Variable</b>
Booking Sheets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Date of program arrival</li> <li>• Date of program departure</li> <li>• Type of program departure</li> </ul>
Mittimi <sup>21</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of sentence</li> <li>• Date of commitment</li> <li>• Governing offense</li> </ul>
Classification Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PCF Number<sup>22</sup></li> <li>• Marital status</li> <li>• Educational level</li> </ul>
Intake Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of children</li> <li>• Custody of children</li> <li>• Mental health status</li> <li>• History of victimization</li> <li>• Type of victimization</li> <li>• Substance use</li> </ul>
Work Release Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment status</li> </ul>
Board of Probation Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recidivism status</li> <li>• Days to recidivism, if applicable</li> <li>• Recidivism offense, if applicable</li> </ul>

<sup>21</sup> Mittimi are official court documents authorizing the commitment of the defendant to a correctional facility for a specified length of time.

<sup>22</sup> This is an offender's numerical identifier used by the Massachusetts court system. It stands for Probation Case File.

### Variables

Recidivism (i.e., rate of reoffending) is the dependent variable in this study and, arguably, the key factor to be examined in assessing the success of the *WIT* program, given that “the effectiveness of corrections is usually measured by rates of recidivism” (Clear & Cole, 1994: 455). Operationalizing recidivism involves two decisions – 1) the length of the follow up period, and 2) the definition of reoffense. Recidivism studies use a variety of follow up periods, ranging from 6 months to three years (Greenfeld, 1993; Cavior & Cohen, 1975). I chose an 18-month follow up period for two reasons. First, time limitations associated with the present study precluded the use of a 3-year follow up period. However, I wanted to use a length of time longer than 12 months, because a longer follow up period provides a more valid and meaningful measure of recidivism. We can infer that the longer it takes a prisoner to reoffend, the more effective the correctional intervention has been. I defined reoffense by limiting it to 1) circumstances in which an inmate had her probation or parole revoked, 2) was found guilty of a new offense, or 3) was incarcerated due to committing an offense, each within the 18-month follow up period. Each of these circumstances involves a finding of guilt subsequent to release. I did not include arrests, dismissals, or pending cases. Some recidivism studies include arrests, but because arrests do not always result in convictions, I considered arrests to be lacking validity, and discarded them as a measure of reoffending. Five variables

associated with recidivism were coded in the following manner – recidivist 0, non-recidivist 1; for those who were recidivists, the type of reoffending behavior was coded as 0 conviction, 1 parole or probation revocation, 2 commitment; the recidivism offenses were coded as 0 person, 1 sex, 2 property, 3 drug, 4 motor vehicle, 5 other. The seriousness of the reoffense was coded using the matrix devised by the Massachusetts Sentencing Commission, with 1 being the least serious offense and 9 being the most serious. In this study, the highest level of offenses the recidivists reached was 6. Days to recidivism were coded numerically.

Since recidivism tells us about the interruption of criminal behavior during the study period, it is important to determine if there are relationships between recidivism and other variables in the study. Therefore, I designated the remaining variables as independent. “Independent variables are presumed to cause or determine a dependent variable” (Babbie, 2007: 18). If covariate relationships are significant, (meaning that one variable is highly correlated to another), they provide guidelines for additional hypothesis testing. The independent variables are:

- Age – This variable is important not only as a descriptor of the population, but also as a covariant with recidivism. The literature demonstrates that as offenders age, they are less likely they to continue their criminal behavior (Hindelang & McDermott, 1981; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1993; Uggen,

2000). I coded this variable numerically.

- Marital status – Conventional wisdom holds that marriage is a prosocial bond that inhibits criminal behavior. Though this is generally true for males, it is less true for criminal females, whose romantic partners are often deviant men (Covington, 1985; Leverentz, 2006). Marital status is a variable worth examining in a recidivism study. The variable is coded as 0 single, 1 married, 2 divorced, 3 separated, 4 widowed.
- Time from commitment to arrival – This numeric variable measures the number of days an inmate spends at MCI-Framingham awaiting transfer to the *WIT* program. This variable is important, since time spent in a medium security prison may affect prisoner reoffending. The “prisonization” literature addresses this effect. Prisonization (Clemmer, 1938) refers to an inmate’s socialization to the prison subculture which “values loyalty, autonomy, and strength” (Pollock, 1997: 230). In the prison context, these seemingly benign values manifest themselves in the use of violence as a routine problem-solving technique, and in extreme group loyalty, to the point where “ratting an inmate out” or “snitching” could result in death. Giallombardo (1966) questioned whether these values were entrenched in women’s prisons. She identified a strong cultural prohibition against “snitching,” but conceded it was rare that women relied on violence as a sanction. Giallombardo also found that more women than men “were

involved in relationships that encouraged interaction rather than isolation” (Pollock, 1997: 231).

- Custody of children refers to caretaking responsibilities up to the point of the mother’s incarceration, not subsequent arrangements made due to imprisonment. I collected this information to understand the prisoner’s motherhood status. In a study by Alarid, et al (2000) lack of attachment to the parental role -- meaning little to no contact between parent and child -- was a significant predictor of criminal activity. This variable was coded based on the status of the child(ren) as follows - 0 lives with mother and father, 1 lives with mother, 2 lives with father, 3 lives with relative, 4 lives with non-relative, 5 in foster care, 7 lives independently, 9 mixed custody (this applies to siblings who have been separated), 10 adopted, 11 deceased.
- Mental health status – Part of the intake process at *WIT* is devoted to gathering information on inmates’ prior mental health diagnoses and treatment. The professional literature states that incarcerated women have higher rates of mental health disorders than the non-incarcerated female population (Henderson, et. al., 1998). Ongoing attention to a major mental illness has important implications for inmate behavior; a stabilized mental health condition enhances the inmate’s overall functioning, including her ability to engage in law-abiding behavior (Dolan, et. al., 2003). Inmates

who reported no prior mental health diagnosis were coded as 0 and those with a diagnosis were coded as 1.

- Type of diagnosis – This variable builds upon the mental health status variable. If a woman reports a diagnosis, identifying it allows a deeper understanding of the population under study. Treatment staff noted on the intake reports the diagnoses reported by program participants. I coded these diagnosis types as follows: 0 depression, 1 bi-polar, 2 anxiety, 3 more than one.
- Victimization history – The literature documents the prevalence of abuse in the female offender population. It is significantly higher than in the non-offending population (Bloom, et. al., 2005; Browne, et al, 1999; Green, et al, 2005). Since this information was noted on the intake reports, I collected it to determine if my sample was representative of the female offender population as a whole. The cases that did not report a history of victimization were coded as 0, and those with a history were coded as 1.
- Type of victimization – In most cases in which a woman reported being a victim of abuse, she also stated the type of abuse she had experienced. I broke these down into four categories based on the information documented on the program's intake reports -- physical, sexual, psychological, more than one. A word of caution is needed here. Cogent arguments can be made that psychological abuse is part of sexual abuse

(Herman, 1992). In gathering these data, however, I took a conservative approach and indicated “more than one” only if the intake file explicitly reported more than one form of abuse. If a file included phrases like “verbal abuse by mom” or “he emotionally abused me” I coded those as psychological abuse. Types of victimization were coded as 0 physical, 1 sexual, 2 psychological, 3 more than one.

- Type of departure – With this variable I wanted to count the number of women who were 1) paroled from the program, 2) completed their sentences, or 3) were terminated and sent back to MCI-Framingham. This variable sheds light on the differences, if any, among the three groups and recidivism. Recent literature indicates that parole failure rates are high (Glaze & Palla, 2005; BJS, 2000, Solomon, 2006). Unquestionably, this attribute needs to be accounted for in assessing recidivism. Regarding terminations, it is important to note that not all of them occurred due to problematic inmate behavior. Some of the women returned to Framingham due to medical conditions requiring treatment the *WIT* program was not able to provide; others were sent back due to immigration detainers - a flight risk factor requiring a more secure placement. However, both these types of termination were rare. I coded this variable as 0 sentence expiration, 1 parole, 2 program termination, 3 escape.

- Substance abuse – Substance type is an important variable in that it is strongly linked to criminal behavior. Alcohol, a legal substance, and marijuana, a mainstream illicit drug, are less likely to expose their users to criminal influences than crack and heroin (Armstrong, et al, 2007). This variable reflects both legal (alcohol and prescription drugs) and illegal substances. The types of substances were coded as follows – 0 alcohol, 1 marijuana, 2 heroin, 3 cocaine, 4 crack, 5 polydrug, 6 other. Though I was unable to gather information on the frequency of substance use, I could capture each offender’s “drug of choice.” In most cases women reported a “drug of choice.” Some files, however, merely noted that an inmate used “pills” or “benzos.” In these cases, I placed the data in the “other” category. If someone reported her drug of choice as “booze and pills” I placed that response in the polydrug category.
- Employment – This variable indicates whether the offender was employed just prior to arrest or incarceration. Research demonstrates that work exposes an individual to conventional others, thereby reducing opportunities and motivation for crime (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Warr, 1998), although it is less clear whether this hold true for women (Li & MacKenzie, 2002). The files contained inconsistent information on this variable, resulting in 93 missing cases out of 380 records. Ultimately, I decided not use the variable in any of the statistical analyses due to the

missing data problem.

Phase two of the data collection process consisted of gathering criminal history information. CORI data were captured using two worksheets I designed specifically for this purpose. I was able to determine and record the severity of each offender's criminal history and recidivism status. See Appendices 2 (Severity of Criminal History Worksheet) and 3 (Recidivism Worksheet), respectively. This information was then placed on the case file code form for subsequent data entry.

In assessing the severity of each offender's criminal history, I used the matrix devised by the Massachusetts Sentencing Commission. I chose this matrix for two reasons. First, since my study examines a correctional strategy in Massachusetts, I wanted my sample variable (severity of criminal history) to be similar to that of the Sentencing Commission. This would make my findings generalizable to another population in the same jurisdiction, thereby justifying the inference that the results represent "something more than the specific observations on which they are based" (Maxfield and Babbie, 2005:436). The second reason for my choice is that seriousness of criminal history is a key concept. Measuring it with an existing instrument used by the Massachusetts Sentencing Commission gives it levels of reliability and validity that are probably stronger than any new measure might have.

The criminal history groups comprise five (5) mutually-exclusive categories ranging from no/minor record to serious/violent record. Seriousness is defined using two factors – number of prior convictions and levels of offense. There are nine offense levels. The Massachusetts Sentencing Commission considers the following attributes associated with criminal acts:

- The value of property lost
- The degree of injury to the victim
- The display of a gun
- Dwelling vs. non-dwelling

To illustrate, an assault and battery with a dangerous weapon resulting in no or minor injury is placed at offense seriousness level 3, whereas the same crime with a significant injury would be placed at offense level 6. By contrast, an offense punishable only by a fine, e.g. disturbing the peace, would be assigned seriousness level 1. For a more detailed description of these classifications see [www.mass.gov/courts](http://www.mass.gov/courts).

Table 2.2 explains the criminal history groups used by the Massachusetts Sentencing Commission and the present study.

*Table 2.2 - Criminal history groups and their definitions*

<b>Criminal History Group</b>	<b>Guideline</b>
No/Minor Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No prior convictions of any kind; or</li> <li>• One to five prior convictions in any combination for offenses in levels one or two</li> </ul>
Moderate Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six or more prior convictions in any combination for offenses in levels one or two; or</li> <li>• One or two prior convictions in any combination for offenses in levels three or four</li> </ul>
Serious Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three to five prior convictions in any combination for offenses in levels three or four; or</li> <li>• One prior conviction for offenses in levels five or six</li> </ul>
Violent or Repetitive Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six or more prior convictions in any combination for offenses in levels three, four, five, or six; or</li> <li>• Two or more prior convictions in any combination for offenses in levels five or six; or</li> <li>• One prior conviction for offenses in level seven through nine</li> </ul>
Serious Violent Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two or more prior convictions in any combination for offenses in level seven through nine</li> </ul>

Source: <http://www.mass.gov/courts>

Using this matrix and the offender's "rap sheet", I counted the number of convictions and their corresponding levels of seriousness. I transferred this information to the severity of criminal history worksheet (Appendix 2) that I created for these data, and then indicated on it the appropriate criminal history group designation.

The last step in the data collection process was to determine the recidivism status of each offender in the sample. Again, using a recidivism worksheet

(Appendix 3) I specifically designed for this purpose, I noted the following:

- Case ID #
- Date of release from *WIT* custody
- Date of 18-month follow up
- Length of time to recidivism, if applicable
- Court activity – disposition type, disposition date, offense type, and seriousness level

If there were no convictions 18 months after release from custody, I designated the offender as a non-recidivist (coded 0) and entered this into the data file. In cases where there were convictions, the case was designated as a recidivist (coded 1), I also noted the disposition and coded it accordingly:

0 – Conviction

1 – Revocation of probation

2 – Commitment

Once the data were collected, I entered them into SPSS v. 15. See Appendix 5 (List of Variables, Attributes, and Codes), which lists each variable along with its corresponding attributes and codes.

This data set is a unique collection of information normally unavailable to the public. It consists of official legal documents such as mittimi (court commitment papers), criminal offender record information (“rap sheets”), and program records containing psychological, social, and demographic material.

Taken together, it provides a rare view of a female offender cohort. Moreover, “data from agency records lie at the heart of research and policy concerns.” (Maxfield & Babbie, 2007: 348). Being granted access to nonpublic records, much of it kept for internal operational purposes, is an invaluable source of data (Ibid.) especially for a criminal justice researcher seeking to conduct applied social science inquiry.

### Quantitative Sample

The study population consists of three hundred eighty (380) female offenders who participated in the *Women in Transition* program from 2001 through 2004. The sampling technique was not random. This number represents the total population of county-sentenced women who entered and left the *WIT* program over the four-year study period. In 2004, the Essex County Sheriff’s Department entered into an agreement with the Federal Probation Service to provide transitional housing for federal female offenders in *WIT*. I excluded these cases (n=10) from the count because their court-related data was not available and because one might expect their experiences to be substantially different.<sup>23</sup>

### Procedure for Collecting Qualitative Data

The decision to seek qualitative data about the *Women in Transition* program was based on the desire to illuminate in narrative detail two distinct experiences -- working in the *Women in Transition* program and encountering it

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<sup>23</sup> Federal inmates tend to be older, to be serving time for drug offenses, to be less likely to have been victims of sexual and physical abuse, and to be more likely to have grown up in a two-parent household. For a detailed report prepared by the US Government Accounting Office on the profiles of state and federal inmates, see *State and Federal Prisoners: Profiles of Inmate Characteristics in 1991 and 1997*.

as an offender. Such data have the potential to shed light on why and how the program is effective (or not) in reducing offender recidivism. Sometimes researchers build, expand upon, or clarify theory as they interpret experiences. The result of this process is known as grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is the main feature of the qualitative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The basic idea behind the grounded theory approach is that the reading and rereading of a “textual database”, in this instance provided by the focus group participants, leads to the identification of concepts and ideas and their interrelationships (Borgatti, 2008), also known as themes. Use of this methodology supports the theoretical framework of the study because it addresses the limitations of the quantitative data analysis by considering the key informants as “inside experts,” which can help to identify new hypotheses for investigation.

The quantitative and qualitative data sets are taken from two different time periods. Quantitative data cover the study period from 2001 through 2004, while the qualitative data were retrieved during 2006 and 2007. I have no reason to believe that the groups of women studied have substantially different experiences. For example, in 2004, the Essex County Sheriff’s Department contracted with the Federal Probation Service to house federal inmates. I excluded this cohort from analysis in both the quantitative and qualitative designs. Additionally, at least three of the staff members who participated in the focus groups worked at *WIT* since its opening in December of 2000. None of them spoke of major changes in

the program or client profile, other than the housing of federal offenders. To the extent that differences were apparent, I was able to make adjustments to the data.

I chose focus groups<sup>24</sup> as a research technique for both logistical and methodological reasons. The *WIT* center, like most correctional facilities, does not have the luxury of quiet, private, unused office space or interview rooms; nor did it have a spacious conference room. Staff suggested that I see inmates in a classroom in a county building nearby. This necessitated the use of correction officers to transport the prisoners to the location. Since it would have been a hardship for staff to transport individual inmates offsite for interviews, it seemed most efficient to meet with groups of inmates rather than individuals. Thus, focus groups became the logical choice given the operational needs of the study site.

Methodologically, focus groups have been shown to be an effective way to “give voice to marginalized groups” (Morgan, 1996: 133). Morgan, citing Nichols-Casebolt & Spake (1995) and Montell (1995) notes that feminist researchers like focus groups because “they allow participants to exercise a fair degree of control over their own interactions” (1996: 133). Loss of control is a paramount feature of incarceration. Therefore, focus groups held special appeal as a means of producing data in an unconstrained, and therefore more valid, manner. Additionally, treatment delivery in the *WIT* program is done in groups. It would be logical to expect that the focus group participants would be comfortable in a familiar group setting, where they have likely disclosed personal and sensitive

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<sup>24</sup> Morgan (1996: 130) defines focus groups as a “research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher.”

information with each other previously. I wanted to take full advantage of this format in the hope that participants could communicate in an open, dynamic manner. I believed this would produce meaningful accounts of their attitudes and perceptions.

I conducted a series of focus groups with 7 *WIT* employees<sup>25</sup> and 23 inmates residing in the *WIT* program who were approximately thirty (30) days from release. I chose this group of inmates for three reasons. First, the average length of stay in the *WIT* program is approximately three months. I wanted to include a group of inmates who had spent at least 60 days in the program. This should have been enough time for inmate orientation and placement on a group treatment schedule, and enough time to get a “feel” for the *WIT* experience. Secondly, the treatment staff needed a window of 30 days to identify inmates who were willing to participate and then to contact me about a mutually acceptable date for the focus group. Lastly, a critical consideration was to make offenders feel at ease so they could speak truthfully about the program without fear of staff retribution. Tapping a population of participants who would be leaving the *WIT* program shortly lent the focus group the quality of a confidential “exit interview” – a chance to speak openly about experiences, especially if they were negative, and without worrying that the information might leak and cause repercussions.

The staff focus group questions sought information on three topics – how *WIT* was established, staff ideas about the goals of the program, and staff

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<sup>25</sup> Due to a scheduling conflict, one staff member could not participate in the focus group, but agreed to an interview where I asked her the same set of questions used in the staff focus groups.

perceptions about the program's efficacy. The inmate focus group questions sought background information on how the women came to be at the *WIT* Center, and then turned more directly to questions about relationships. My goal was to determine if *WIT* helped or hurt their relationships with loved ones. In particular, I wanted to know how it affected their ability to form and maintain healthy connections. Interviews ended with each participant giving her own assessment of her chances of success post release. See Appendix 4 – Focus Group Questions.

Research involving human subjects requires particular attention to the maxim to “do no harm.” Five overriding concerns are voluntary participation, informed consent, subject well-being, confidentiality, and researcher identity disclosure (Schutt, 2005). To conduct this research with human subjects, I was required to present my research protocol to Northeastern University's Institutional Review Board. On July 5, 2006, I received approval from the full Board to proceed. I addressed each ethical issue as described below:

- Voluntary participation - I recruited participants by placing a recruitment poster (see Appendix 6- Recruitment Poster) inside the facility stating that I was seeking volunteers to join in a focus group discussion about re-entry and relationships. The poster listed seven “rules” for participation. They were:
  - Participation is voluntary.
  - I will tape-record the discussions.

- Responses will be kept confidential.
- No names or other identifying information will be recorded.
- You can refuse to answer questions at any time.
- There is no penalty for refusing to participate.
- There is no reward for choosing to participate.

If inmates were interested in participating, they signed up on a list maintained by the facility's Director of Treatment. The Director of Treatment would then ascertain which inmates were within thirty days of release. When the Director had a group of five to ten participants, she contacted me and we arranged a mutually convenient date and time for the group to meet. No staff members were present during the offender focus group. Group meetings were conducted off site, providing an added measure of confidentiality.

- Informed consent – I used an unsigned consent form (see Appendix 7 – Unsigned Consent Form) the group participants could retain that listed important details about the research project. It explained that participants must be 18 years of age; that the possible risks or discomforts of the study are minimal; that there would be no direct benefits to them for participating in the study; that their part in the study would be confidential; the decision to participate in the focus group would be solely theirs; and that if they had questions about the study or their rights as human subjects they could contact the principal

investigator or Northeastern's Division of Research Integrity. I read the form to each group prior to the start of the discussion and then answered ensuing questions.

- Subject well being – The *WIT* program has two full time clinical employees who conduct treatment groups, program intakes, and provide individual counseling. At least one staff member spoke with each set of focus group participants before the group discussion to ensure voluntary participation, and after the group discussion to identify concerns about participation and to address any lingering effects from taking part in the group. I received no complaints from focus group members or staff after conducting the groups. In fact, I was told repeatedly by the treatment staff that the inmates enjoyed the experience and appreciated having their opinions solicited.
- Confidentiality - At no time during the focus groups did I learn the full names of the participants. On occasion during the discussions, an inmate would call another inmate by name. However, during transcription of the interviews I assigned the participants fictitious names to eliminate any possibility of identity disclosure.
- Identity disclosure –By contrast, I disclosed my identity before the start of each group. The reason for this, beyond common courtesy, is that I previously worked in the correctional system in Massachusetts

for 24 years, and there was a slight possibility that a participant might have known me or heard my name during a previous incarceration. I explained that my role during the focus group was that of independent researcher, not prison official or agency representative. My status as a former correctional practitioner in Massachusetts is a unique feature of this study. I felt comfortable alone in a room with a group of offenders. I sensed that they picked up my comfort level and, as a result, were willing to speak openly about their experiences.

Additionally, prison life comes with its own vocabulary. Because I am familiar with prison culture, I did not have to interrupt the discussions to ask clarifying questions. This helped to keep the focus groups on task and the discussion flow freely and easily. For example, when inmates used words like “classification center,” “hole,” and “good time” I understood the terms, whereas a researcher unfamiliar with prisons might not have.

Each group discussion lasted approximately one hour. The focus groups were conducted over a period of eleven months, from September 2006 through July 2007. A total of 24 inmates participated in four focus groups (ranging from 4 to 8 participants per group); and seven employees participated in two focus groups. Due to a scheduling conflict, I interviewed one employee by herself earlier on the day of the first focus group. Please see Appendix 8 (Schedule of Inmate and Staff

Focus Groups) for a breakdown of focus group types, dates, and sample sizes.

Research projects generally use four to six focus groups to reach a data “saturation point” (Morgan, 1996). This seemed true in the present study, as no new information was forthcoming by the fourth inmate focus group. Each inmate focus group consisted of a homogeneous sample: county-sentenced female offenders in a low-security correctional setting. With staff, however, I conducted only two focus groups, plus the single employee interview. Though the number of groups fell below the standard of four, they represented a third of the staff at the center. Moreover, by the end of the second staff focus group discussion, I found a high level of consistency in the responses to the question set, and I felt confident that new information would not be forthcoming.

After transcribing the tape recorded focus group responses, I entered the reports into QSR NVivo v.2 – a qualitative software application designed to help researchers conduct thematic analyses. Through multiple readings of the focus group transcripts I was able to identify recurring themes. The qualitative software also enabled me to create nodes, a place to store ideas, as the analytical process continued. Nodes could be created mechanically, for example, in the form of “Answers to Focus Group Question 1” or intuitively, as in “what respondents liked about the *WIT* program.” By creating node reports I was able to organize and code data to refine and expand upon themes. I feel confident that the qualitative results are a reliable reflection of the staff discussions, and of what the

inmates claimed to have experienced, and that these were consistent. I believe the qualitative results bring an important dimension to the study and add to our understanding of the program's effectiveness.

### **Chapter 3 - The Portrait of the Female Offender: A Statistical Description and Analysis of Participants in the *Women in Transition* Program**

The purpose of this study is to examine rates of reoffending among female offenders in a gender-specific program within the context of relational theory. The investigation uses the concept of “relational recovery” as an explanation for crime desistance during an 18-month study period. To test this hypothesis, Chapter 3 addresses four general research questions that guide the analysis of the quantitative data. The preliminary questions are:

1. What are the characteristics of the participants in the *Women in Transition* Program during the period 2001 to 2004?
2. What is the success rate<sup>26</sup> of the offenders who have gone through the program?
3. What are the differences between the *WIT* participants who reoffended and those who did not?
4. What characteristics of the study population predict recidivism and are they related to developing healthy connections?

I consider these questions by laying out univariate, bivariate and multivariate analyses of the information collected in the quantitative portion of the study. I will begin by describing the study population and then move to more complex analyses using multiple variables and examining the relationships among them.

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<sup>26</sup> I define “success” as no recommitments or convictions within 18 months after release from the *WIT* program.

Research Question 1 – What are the characteristics of the study population?

A review of national, statewide, and *WIT* personal and criminal characteristics indicate that female prisoners are a homogeneous group. They are typically non-violent, in their mid-thirties, single mothers with two children under the age of 18, and illicit substance users. Most have experienced sexual or physical abuse. The majority has at least a high school education, and nearly two thirds are women of color (BJS, 2000; Bloom, et. al., 1994; Chesney-Lind, 1997). Except for the race/ethnicity variable, the *WIT* population mirrors these characteristics. The racial differences between the study population and the national profile is likely explained by the racial demographic of Essex County, which is 89.4% white (US Census Bureau, 2005).

For a complete descriptive analysis of the study population only, see Appendix 9 – Descriptive Analysis of Study Population. It contains the frequency distributions and descriptive statistics, which include data on personal characteristics such as marital status, custody of children at time of arrest, type of victimization reported, and type of mental health diagnosis reported. Criminal history, recidivism data, and limited program information are also included in the appendix. Notable frequencies show that only 13% of the women had violent or repetitive criminal histories. Additionally, 98% of the population reported substance use, and 64% stated they were victims of sexual or physical trauma. For those reporting a mental health diagnosis (69%), depression was the most

common one (42%). Almost two-thirds of the study population (61%) were non-recidivists.

Table 3.1 contains data that compares the study population with female prisoners statewide. Unless otherwise indicated, the statewide figures are gleaned from the Massachusetts Department of Correction Annual Report (2006), which contained data covering the same period as in the present study – 2001 through 2004. Comparisons of the data sets show no major differences between the two groups. Both groups of inmates are predominantly white, in their early thirties, non-violent offenders, with 2 children. Almost all are substance users, with substantially more than half reporting personal victimization and mental health problems, and few reporting a college-level education.

**Table 3.1 Comparison of Women in Transition Study Sample with Statewide Female Offender Characteristics**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Women in Transition</b>	<b>Statewide</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	75.8%	64% <sup>27</sup>
Black	8.1%	21%
Hispanic	15%	12%
Other	1.1%	2%
<b>Children</b>		
Yes	75%	75% <sup>28</sup>
No	25%	25%
Mean number of children	2	2
<b>Education</b>		
No high school diploma	44.5%	32%
High school diploma/GED	35.2%	29.25%
Some college	15.5%	11.5%
College graduate	4.8%	2.25%
None reported		25%
<b>Personal Victimization</b>		
Yes	63.9%	71.5% <sup>29</sup>
No	36.1%	28.5%
<b>Substance Use</b>		
Yes	98.7%	90%
No	1.3%	10%
<b>Mental Health Issue</b>		
Yes	68.9%	53% <sup>30</sup>
No	31.1%	
<b>Offense</b>		
Non-violent offense	89.2%	83.3%
Violent offense	10.8%	16.7%
<b>Type of Offense</b>		
Drug	36.8%	25.5%
Property	25.5%	28%
Motor vehicle	16.6%	29.8%
Other	10.8%	
<b>Age</b>		
Mean age	33	34

The findings regarding education, victimization, substance use, and mental health resonate with Daly's (1992) study on pathways theory. Daly found a

<sup>27</sup> These data are taken from the Massachusetts Department of Correction report *2004 County Commitments*

<sup>28</sup> These data are taken from a report prepared by Kates, et al., (2005).

<sup>29</sup> These data are taken from a National Institute of Corrections Report (2000).

<sup>30</sup> This figure represents the percentage of women at MCI-Framingham who were prescribed psychotropic medication (Collins & Howe, 2006).

pattern of life circumstances in her sample of female law breakers that started with difficulties in childhood (broken homes, abuse, neglect), progressed to school troubles, (often as a result of using drugs) and then continued on to the downward spiral of abusive adult relationships, psychological dysfunction, and crime. Though Daly noted a concern about the generalizability in her study, her pathways theory does, in fact, help to explain the personal characteristics of this study population and the statewide data. Both data sets indicate a high prevalence of both reported victimization and prior mental health diagnoses. Almost all participants reported substance use, with 69% of the *WIT* population indicating regular use of more than one substance. More than 44% of the women in the *WIT* population did not have a high school diploma.

Though female offenders' pathways to crime are strikingly consistent, their route out of crime is less clear and is a focal point of this study. The characteristics of *WIT* inmates present both challenges and opportunities for correctional managers. The challenges are substance abuse, education, mental health issues, victimization histories, and children. Given the complexity of participants' needs and risks, these inmates require resources beyond what a typical correctional program provides, especially considering that the average length of stay in *WIT* is only 3 months. On the other hand, there are opportunities to be seized in working with this population. The offenders are mostly non-violent and relatively mature. These characteristics lend themselves to successful

community reintegration, since non-dangerous offenders are often suitable for minimum security and pre-release settings and risk of recidivism decreases with age.

*Research Question 2 – What is the success rate of WIT participants?*

The most common measure of correctional effectiveness is recidivism. Of the 380 inmates studied at *WIT*, 38.9% reoffended within 18 months after release indicating a 61.1% success rate. It is difficult to assess the meaning of this measure without a context for comparison, so I transformed two *WIT* variables in an attempt to create a basis for comparison with a recent Massachusetts recidivism study conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Correction. First, I reduced the *WIT* follow up period from 18 months to 12 months; I then redefined *WIT* recidivism as reincarcerations only to match the Department of Correction measure.

Table 3.2 displays the findings of both recidivism studies. The *WIT* rate is significantly lower than that of the Department of Correction, with a chi square value of 24.73. Though these results are not intended as direct comparisons, given the differences in types of offenders housed at the state level, they do provide a context within which to understand the recidivism outcomes of the *Women in Transition* program.

**Table 3.2 Comparison of Two Recidivism Studies**

	<b>Women in Transition N=380 women</b>	<b>MA Department of Correction N=935 women</b>
<b>Study period</b>	2001-2004	2002
<b>Length of follow-up period</b>	12 months	12 months
<b>Recidivism measures</b>	Reincarceration	Reincarceration
<b>% Recidivists</b>	20.6%	25%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Correction *Annual Report* (2006)

Not only is the absence of reoffending considered a measure of correctional program success, the seriousness of the reoffense is sometimes considered. If an inmate reoffends by committing a crime that is less harmful than her original crime, that could be judged as an improvement in her behavior (Petersilia, 1993). Table 3.3 compares the original offenses of *WIT* recidivists and their subsequent crimes.

**Table 3.3 Comparison of Original Offenses and Reoffending Offenses Among WIT Recidivists**

Type of Offense	Original Offense	Reoffending Offense	Percent Change
<b>Drug</b>	38.5% (57)	27% (40)	-11.5%
<b>Property</b>	28.4% (42)	21.6% (32)	-6.8%
<b>Other<sup>31</sup></b>	14.2% (21)	30.4% (45)	16.2%
<b>Person<sup>32</sup></b>	11.5% (17)	9.5% (14)	-2%
<b>Motor Vehicle</b>	7.4% (11)	11.5% (17)	4.1%
<b>Total</b>	100% (148)	100% (148)	

I conducted a chi square test to assess whether there was a significant difference between original and reoffending offenses, and the results were significant. The highest category of reoffense was “other.” Referring to Appendix 10 (List of “Other” Offenses), most of the crimes in this category are relatively minor, compared to drug, property, and person crimes.<sup>33</sup> The most common new offenses were prostitution, trespassing, and decency/public peace crimes. Though further analysis is needed before a claim of causation can be made, the relationship between pre-*WIT* convictions and post-*WIT* convictions is significant, especially in the category of drug offenses. It is plausible that the programming at *WIT* was effective in helping to maintain the sobriety of participants.

Another finding is that almost 67% of all recidivists were recommitted.

This is noteworthy because the women were being sent back to prison for crimes less serious than those they had originally committed, as shown in the table

<sup>31</sup> See Appendix 10 for a complete list of crimes designated as “other.”

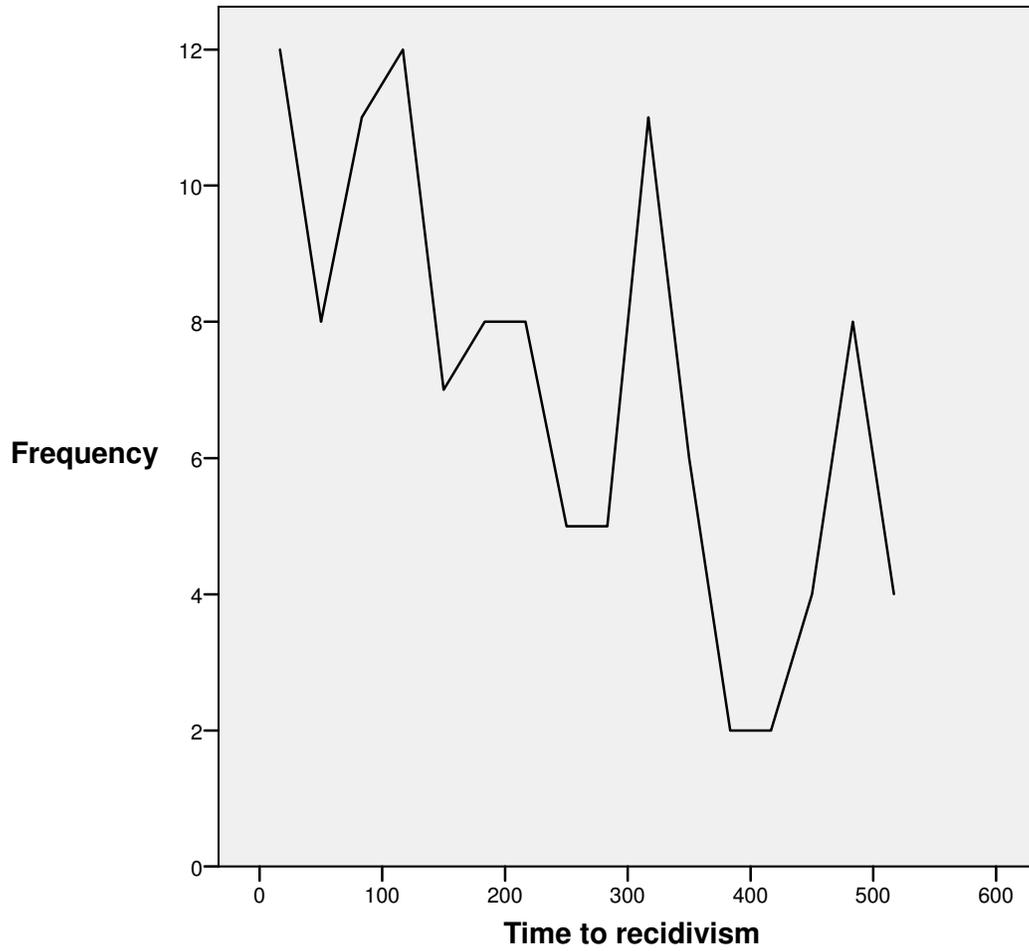
<sup>32</sup> Included in this category are sex offenses, n=4, which comprised lewd and lascivious behavior, and unnatural acts. A review of offenders’ criminal records indicates that these convictions were most likely associated with acts of prostitution rather than predatory behavior. According to the US Department of Justice (2007), female sex offenders account for fewer than 1% of all forcible rapes.

<sup>33</sup> Weapons offenses fall into the “other” category, but none of the women in the *WIT* sample were convicted of weapons-related offenses.

above. Whether this “short leash” enhances public safety or not is debatable, but it does reflect what Steffensmeier, et al (2005), describe in their study as a growing intolerance of criminally deviant behavior among girls and women.

Of the 148 recidivists in the *WIT* population, the average number of days to recidivism was 220 – a little over seven months. The line chart on the next page displays the timetable of reoffending. The greatest risk for recidivism appears to be within the first 100 days after release. This is consistent with the recidivism literature (McLean, et al, 2006; Uggen, 2000) and has practical implications for designing offender reentry models. It also invites further research about the vulnerabilities of offenders upon release and how they might be mitigated. For example, research could inform a reintegration model with a treatment component entitled, “The First 100 Days.” This might prepare newly-released female offenders for many of the daunting challenges they face, such as being reunited with children, family, and friends, and the expectations that accompany the return of an important family member.

*Graph 3.1 – Number of Days to Recidivism of WIT Recidivists*



The next step is to examine the recidivist and non-recidivist cohorts in the *WIT* population. Fully 60% of the *Women in Transition* population did not reoffend in the 18 months after release, suggesting that there may be important differences between the recidivist and non-recidivist groups. However, if there are differences, are they attributable to a program effect, personal characteristics, or chance?

*Research Question 3 - What are the differences between the WIT participants who reoffended and those who did not?*

It has been established that more *WIT* women (61%) have favorable reentry outcomes after leaving *WIT* than those that do not (39%). This logically leads to the next question: Is there a difference between *WIT* recidivists and non-recidivists? This line of inquiry is important for two reasons. First, it is a way to conduct a preliminary test of the hypothesis that sound personal connections, as defined by relational theory, explain reductions in recidivism. Second, it has the potential to uncover other plausible explanations for *WIT*'s favorable outcomes, some of which may not have anything to do with a program effect, such as age and criminal history. To evaluate the differences between these two cohorts, I conducted two statistical tests -- Chi Square and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results of these tests are presented in Appendix 11 – Summary of Bivariate Analyses.

### Bivariate Analyses

Of the nineteen independent variables in this study, fourteen of them are non-numerical, categorical variables which require chi square analysis. Chi square is the statistical analysis technique used to determine variance among two dichotomous groups on a non-quantitative measure such as race or marital status. I will organize the discussion of the analysis beginning with the most significant results (those at the .01 level), and then move on to the findings at the .05 level.

As Appendix 11 shows, eight categorical variables showed a significant difference between recidivists and non-recidivists. The strongest relationships ( $p < .01$ ) were associated with type of substance used, governing offense, severity of criminal history, and type of mental health diagnosis.

- Substance type and governing offense - A greater proportion of non-recidivists fell into the category of polydrug users (58%) and drinkers (86%). This finding is counterintuitive, in that we would expect that offenders struggling with sobriety would be more likely to reoffend. Yet, when considering the nature of the *Women in Transition* program, it may be suggestive of a program effect because the *WIT* program focuses strongly on recovery from substance abuse. As noted in Chapter 2, no fewer than five weekly treatment groups address recovery from addiction. Another finding related to substance use is the governing offense of the recidivists. Thirty-seven percent of total *WIT* participants were serving time for drug offenses,

yet a higher percentage of non-recidivists (59.3%) had been originally committed on drug charges. Both of these findings indicate that the *WIT* program may contribute to reductions in drug reoffending. We can infer from these results that reductions in illicit drug use may be likely, as well.

- Criminal history - Regarding severity of criminal history, I placed offenders in two categories – those with a minor record or none at all and those with more serious records. Not surprisingly, most (76%) with no record or minor records constituted the largest proportion of non-recidivists. This finding could be indicative of the specific deterrent effect of incarceration – the notion that the pains of imprisonment outweigh the benefits of crime.
- Type of mental health diagnosis – The most frequently reported diagnosis among the *WIT* population was depression. This finding was reflected among the recidivist population as well at 54%. Although I cannot state with certainty what explains this finding, it is easy to imagine that the impoverished lives many female offenders lead might contribute to the overrepresentation of this mood disorder among those who reoffend.

Significant relationships at the .05 level were victimization history, mental health diagnosis, type of victimization, and type of departure from the program, and are discussed below.

- History and type of victimization - Among those reporting a history of victimization (63.9%), fifty-seven percent of them fell into the category of

non-recidivist. The analysis further shows that of all those reporting victimization, the most frequently reported type (more than one) was highest among non-recidivists. This is one of the most intriguing findings of the bivariate analyses, because, one could argue that multiple forms of abuse cause the most profound psychological damage and enduring trauma in its victims. When considering this finding alongside the qualitative data, it may be indicative of the power of the *WIT* program to promote resilience and empowerment, thereby interrupting unhealthy relationship patterns that often put women on the pathway to criminal offending.

- Mental health diagnosis - Another significant correlation was found between mental health diagnosis and recidivism. Almost half the *WIT* participants (49%) reporting having received mental health diagnosis, yet 56% of them were non-recidivists. Combining the stigma of having a mental illness with being an ex-offender makes for a difficult transition to successful reintegration, yet the outcome is encouraging.
- Departure from the program - The last significant finding of the chi square analyses showed a positive relationship between non-recidivism and completing the *WIT* program. Nearly two thirds (65%) of the non-recidivists were program completers. This is a critical outcome, though not unexpected, especially within the context of the qualitative analysis. When women successfully leave the *WIT* program, they do so knowing they have

successfully finished something they have started. They leave on good terms with the staff who extend to them an open invitation to return to *WIT* for on-going support, and to share their success stories with other participants.

Unlike chi square, the ANOVA analyzes the variance between two mutually-exclusive groups when the variables are numerical. The test is used to answer the question: where there are two mutually-exclusive groups, such as recidivists and non-recidivists, are there significant differences between them in regard to a quantitative measure such as age or length of sentence. The ANOVA findings show that there are significant differences between recidivists and non-recidivist in the following variables – age, number of days awaiting program arrival, and number of days in the *WIT* program.

- Age - First, the older the offender, the less likely she was to recidivate. This finding is consistent with the literature on age and desistance from crime (Sampson & Laub, 2005). Non-recidivists in the *WIT* program were, on average, three years older than those who were recidivists.
- Days awaiting transfer to *WIT* - The less time an offender awaited transfer at MCI-Framingham, the less likely she was to recidivate. Recidivists spent, on average, about three weeks longer at the state prison for women than non-recidivists. This result may be suggestive of a “prisonization” effect - the absorption of deviant norms and values associated with prison culture (Clemmer, 1930; Sykes, 1958; Giamllobardo, 1966). Though one might think

that three weeks would be too short time for anti-social values to be inculcated, consider the Stanford Prison Experiment. Zimbardo's (1973) classic study showed how quickly well-adjusted subjects can decompensate when put into the role of prisoners and guards. The study, scheduled to last two weeks, was abruptly terminated after only six days due to the deteriorating mental health of the prisoners and the increasing brutality of the guards.

- Number of days at *WIT* - The longer an offender participated in the *WIT* program, the less likely she was to recidivate. Non-recidivists participated in the program on average nineteen days longer than recidivists: 96 days as compared to 77 days. Though only a difference of approximately three weeks, these results point to a plausible explanation of relational theory as a factor in reducing recidivism. These extra days may have fortified pro-social bonds created with staff members and fellow program participants. In addition, this length of time could have contributed to the stability of reestablishing family relationships, securing employment, or generally deepening the process of relational recovery. Recall from Chapter 2 the weekly treatment schedule that the inmates must adhere to. Even if offenders are employed in the community while incarcerated at *WIT*, they are still expected to participate in treatment groups at the center. The 12-hour program day keeps participants involved, engaged, and ever mindful of their recovery and their plans for reentry. The impact of being immersed in one's recovery day in and day out cannot be

underestimated. This is particularly important when considering the *WIT* atmosphere. The qualitative results discussed in Chapter 4 will describe a program environment marked by respect, empathy, safety, and care. These factors are critically important to effecting change in a population characterized by significant trauma histories and can be directly tied to the relational recovery. Unfortunately, without a control or comparison group, the quantitative results cannot definitively advance the proposition that “*WIT* works”, but the findings lay the foundation for further multivariate analysis, as well as qualitative analysis.

*Research Question 4 - What characteristics of the study population predict recidivism and are they related to developing healthy connections?*

I conducted a Pearson’s correlational analysis to estimate the associations among the independent variables. See Appendix 12 (Correlational Matrix). The purpose of this analysis was to identify strong correlations among the predictor variables to rule out potential problems of multicollinearity.<sup>34</sup> The data in Appendix 12 shows that the highest correlations were between victimization history and type of victimization (-.72) and mental health diagnosis and diagnosis type (-.73). Clearly, these findings show a high likelihood of multicollinearity. The correlations between the victimization and mental health variables are self-evident. The remaining significant relationships between predictor variables were

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<sup>34</sup>Multicollinearity occurs when two or more variables are highly correlated but insignificant as an explanation of the relationship between two variables.

sufficiently low to rule out multicollinearity and now prepare us to move on to the next set of analyses.

Logistic regression is used predictively by measuring the interaction effects of the independent variables (normally categorical ones) on the dependent variable, in this case, recidivism.

When using logistic regression as a predictive tool, it is necessary to create dichotomous attributes associated with the variables. This means the dependent variable, recidivism, is coded as 0 for non-recidivist, and 1 for recidivist. The independent variables are recoded as binary variables as summarized in the table below:

***Table 3.4 - Independent Variables and Codes for Logistic Regression***

<b>Original Variable/Type</b>	<b>Recoded Variable (Code)<sup>35</sup></b>	<b>Distribution Percents</b>
Age /Continuous	Under 30 (0)	55%
	Over 30 (1)	45%
Education Level/Categorical	No college (0)	79%
	Some college (1)	21%
Marital Status/Categorical	Unmarried (0)	91%
	Married (1)	9%
Criminal History/Categorical	No record (0)	22%
	Some record (1)	78%
Offense/Categorical	Drug offense (0)	37%
	Non-drug offense (1)	63%
Type of Departure from WIT/Categorical	Did not complete program (0)	30%
	Completed program (1)	70%
Number of Days Awaiting Transfer to the WIT Program/Continuous	Less than 60 days(0)	74%
	More than 60 days(1)	26%
Number of Days in the WIT Program/Continuous	Less than 90 days (0)	61%
	More than 90 days (1)	39%
Victimization History	None reported (0)	36%
	Yes (1)	64%
Prior Mental Health Diagnosis	None reported (0)	31%
	Yes (1)	69%

<sup>35</sup> Victimization history and mental health diagnosis were not recoded. They were initially created as variables with dichotomous attributes, meaning that the absence of the characteristic was coded as 0, and the presence of it was coded as 1.

After recoding the variables, I employed the stepwise method of logistic regression to predict the probability of reoffending among *WIT* participants. I first entered personal characteristics (age, educational level, marital status) into the model. In step 2, I entered the criminal history variables (criminal record and current offense). Step 3 included the program-related variables (program completion status, time waiting to enter the program, and time in the program), and in step 4 I included the self-reported data on prior victimization history and mental health diagnosis, two variables that characterize the life experiences of many female offenders. See Appendix 13 for a complex display of the stepwise analyses. Table 3.5 displays the final results of the analysis. This table displays the regression coefficient (B)<sup>36</sup>, the standard error of the coefficient<sup>37</sup>, the significance of the regression coefficients (Sig.)<sup>38</sup>, and the odds ratio [Exp (B)]. Odds ratios indicate the probability of an event occurring and are the most meaningful statistic in the regression equation. The Nagelkerke R Square for the model indicates a moderate rating of robustness of .151. This means that the model is only somewhat satisfactory in predicting the correlation between the predicted values and the actual values. An R square score between .2 and .4 are the conventional measures of a highly robust model.

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<sup>36</sup> “Regression coefficient” refers to the amount of change in one variable that affects another variable. The larger the coefficient, the stronger its effect on the dependent variable.

<sup>37</sup> The standard error refers to variability of the regression coefficient.

<sup>38</sup> Significance level indicates the test of the null hypothesis. When this level is .05 or below, we reject the null hypothesis, i.e., that there is no difference between the group of recidivists and non-recidivists.

**Table 3.5 - Logistic regression, Importance of factors influencing recidivism**

	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Age(1)	-.828	.256	1	.001**	.437
Education(1)	.390	.325	1	.231	1.477
Marital status (1)	-.277	.434	1	.523	.758
Criminal record(1)	-.725	.329	1	.027*	.484
Offense(1)	.161	.256	1	.529	1.175
Completion status(1)	-.525	.275	1	.056	.591
Wait time to WIT(1)	-.295	.277	1	.285	.744
Time in WIT (1)	.155	.263	1	.555	1.168
Victimization	.317	.269	1	.237	1.374
Mental health	.520	.292	1	.075	1.682
Constant	-.383	.528	1	.468	.682

\*\*p-value<.01

\*p-value <.05

After controlling for all ten variables, age, not surprisingly, remained the most significant predictor of recidivism, though it is not a particularly robust finding. However, it does confirm the findings in the bivariate analysis. *WIT* participants over 30 years old have a .44 lower odds of recidivating. Criminal record and completion of the *WIT* program were also factors significantly related to recidivism prediction. Women with criminal records have .48 lower odds of recidivating. This finding may be a function of age. The participants with no records or minor records tend to be younger than those with records.

Another key finding worthy of fuller discussion is the interactive effect between number of days in the *WIT* program and whether the participant successfully completes the program. When the variable, days in the program, is excluded from the model, completion status becomes significant. See Table 3.6.

**Table 3.6 - Logistic regression, Importance of factors influencing recidivism with Days in the Program Excluded**

	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Age(1)	-.843	.255	1	.001**	.430
Education(1)	.384	.324	1	.237	1.468
Marital status (1)	-.282	.433	1	.515	.755
Criminal record(1)	-.718	.329	1	.029*	.488
Offense(1)	.152	.255	1	.552	.1164
Completion status(1)	-.566	.267	1	.034*	.568
Wait time to WIT(1)	-.290	.276	1	.293	.748
Victimization	.324	.268	1	.227	1.383
Mental health	.530	.291	1	.069	1.698
Constant	-.260	.484	1	.591	.771

\*\*p-value<.01

\*p-value <.05

An important distinction needs to be made because the variables – days in the program and successful completion – cannot be equated. Theoretically, an inmate could spend an above average number of days at the program and not receive therapeutic value from it. Conversely, a participant could spend fewer than average days there and successfully completes the program. Program completion is an achievement that may have substantial symbolic and therapeutic value, regardless of the number of days in the program.

Correctional managers cannot control fixed characteristics like the age or criminal histories of inmates, but there are strategies that could be adopted to assist inmates in non-static factors to promote successful completion. Dealing with difficult issues by a means other than self-medicating with substances is

critical to achieving sobriety. If program staff expect inmates to actively engage in the recovery process, one could anticipate that inmates might experience unsettling emotions, memories of past abuse, or grief over personal losses. If an inmate's behavior destabilizes during the recovery process, it could be seen as a risk of flight, rather than a need for structure, safety, and containment. Since correctional programs are risk-averse, program termination and a return to a more restrictive level of custody is often the response to destabilized offenders. These actions send the message that these participants are program failures, continuing the string of failures they have experienced throughout their lives. I believe that is one reason why we can predict that program completers will not recidivate. Program completion is not only a positive achievement that puts the offender on a very different pathway from the one that led her to prison, but may also be an indicator of healthy relationships formed with staff and other program participants. The evidence of this lies in the fact that the *WIT* program delivers an intensive treatment model that has the potential to reopen wounds from past traumas. Yet, 70% of its participants avoid program terminations and escapes. The qualitative data will show that this treatment is delivered in a caring environment, one that allows relational recovery to take root.

Many questions remain from the quantitative analysis, but the qualitative analysis will uncover rich contextual data about the *WIT* experience and provide a deeper understanding of the *WIT* program, its staff, and its clients. The analysis

may help us recognize the value of developing pro-social relationships as part of a successful reentry process.

## Chapter 4 – Qualitative Analysis: Understanding the *Women in Transition* Experience

### Introduction

In Chapter 3, I presented data showing that if a female offender completes the *Women in Transition* program, she is less likely to reoffend as compared to women who do not. Without the use of a control group, this study cannot show a comparative program effect, but the finding is nonetheless informative, because it lays the foundation for a contextual understanding of female offender programming and recidivism. In this chapter, I attempt to understand how the program reduces recidivism. I do this through qualitative analysis – a method that values the thoughts, beliefs, and opinions of the subjects under study. This approach is firmly rooted in the interpretive tradition which posits that researchers can learn from the experiences of individuals, especially when the process of listening and interpreting is carried out in a systematic and formal manner (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through the use of staff and inmate focus groups, I provide an environmental context for the *Women in Transition* program, demonstrating what it is like to work there, and what it is like to serve time there. This analysis found a highly relational environment that supports the conceptual frameworks of trauma recovery and relational theory.

It must be pointed out, however, that the data provided by the inmate focus groups were limited to their experiences while at the *WIT* program and does

not assess their actual post-release outcomes. In other words, the recidivism rates of the inmates in the focus groups were not assessed. Recidivism measures were limited to the *WIT* population from 2001 through 2004. I intend to address this limitation in future research. Nonetheless, the qualitative analysis provides an insider's view of the *WIT* experience.

### **Trauma and Relationships**

“Trauma” comes from the Greek word meaning *wound*. It is used to describe both psychological and physical injuries caused by a sudden shock to the psyche or body. Trauma can be simultaneously physical and psychological, as in the case of child abuse and neglect, rape, intimate partner battering, and stranger violence. In her groundbreaking book, *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman (1992) explored trauma through the eyes of Holocaust survivors, combat veterans, and rape victims. The trauma literature continues to expand, providing a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. More recently, scholarship has advanced the theory of “betrayal trauma” (Freyd, 1994, 1996). Freyd describes it as a traumatic experience that also “involves a betrayal of trust, such as childhood abuse perpetrated by an adult who is quite close to the victim” (Goldberg & Freyd, 2006: 41) Victims of such violations experience symptoms of depression, become emotionally indifferent, and are at risk of entering abusive relationships. This is contrasted with non-betrayal trauma, which predominantly causes symptoms of hyper-arousal and anxiety. In a study examining betrayal trauma,

Goldberg & Freyd (2006) found a statistically significant gender difference. Not surprisingly, women experienced higher rates of betrayal trauma than men. In a sample of 726 survey respondents (422 women and 302 men), 40% of women compared to 12% of men experienced betrayal trauma as adults, and 30% of women compared to 16% of men experienced it in childhood. These gendered results are consistent with reports by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1999). In a study examining prior victimization among probationers and inmates, 37% of female offenders reported physical and/or sexual abuse occurring before the age of 18, compared with 14% of male offenders. In the present study, 64% of the *WIT* population reported past victimization. In most instances the *WIT* case files did not specifically distinguish between childhood and adult forms of trauma, but almost half (47%) of the women's self-reports of trauma indicated they experienced more than one form of abuse in their lifetimes. Clearly, not all trauma victims turn to crime as a maladaptive coping mechanism, however, trauma victims are overrepresented among the female offender population. Thus, it seems logical to study recidivism in women within a framework of trauma recovery.

Trauma is a prominent experience among female offenders, both nationally and in the present study. More often than not, a female offender is a survivor of trauma. Female offender programming can benefit from considering this fact. I believe it has important implications for devising correctional strategies to deal effectively with women criminals. Clearly, our understanding of effective

programming for female offenders is incomplete, but we know generally that trauma adversely affects a person's relational life. Judith Herman (1992: 133) explains:

The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation.

Said another way, victimization, relationship, and recovery are inextricably linked. According to relational theory, a woman's sense of self-worth can be severely undermined when relationships that are important to her (e.g., parent or lover) are a source of physical and psychological harm. Psychological recovery from such trauma is more likely to occur when those relationships are repaired or healthy ones are created. It should follow, then, that strategies encouraging female offenders to reform should consider these notions. This premise is the justification for the use of the qualitative method in this study. Qualitative analysis can expand the scope of inquiry into complex, sensitive concepts because it allows the researcher to apply meaning, in a structured and scientific way, to the experiences of the population being studied. Interpreting observations do not have to be limited to numerical measures, especially when attempting to understand the complexities of human behavior. By listening to and then analyzing the detailed

experiences of the staff and inmates at the *Women in Transition*, I was able to support the premise of the this study that the *WIT* program attends to the relational needs of its participants, and because of this, it might be a factor in explaining the overall positive outcomes of the program.

### **Method**

I conducted staff and inmate focus groups over a period of ten months in 2006 and 2007. Each set of focus group conversations was transcribed and downloaded into a qualitative analysis software program called NVivo, version 2. Through multiple readings of the transcripts, I was able to develop a variety of nodes, described as a “containers” for ideas that emerged from the data. Noding can be done in two ways -- mechanically and through interpretation. For example, I placed all participant responses to a single question in a node called “Responses to Question 1.” This is a type of mechanical node creation, which can be accomplished for each focus group question without interpretation of data. Then, from repeated readings of the data gathered from each question, coding of data can be done, and recurring themes identified. See Appendix 13 (NVivo Coding Report) for an example of a coding report.

Qualitative analysis depends upon both mechanical manipulation of the data, as described above, and the researcher’s interpretation of it. To make sense of qualitative data, researchers typically look for patterns. Nodes created from patterns contain *similar ideas* found in the responses to *different questions*. For

example, when staff answered questions about the goals of the program, the reasons for its creation, and why they perceive it to be effective, I heard them speak repeatedly about the importance of programming as a way to reduce recidivism. This led me to identify a theme that I call the fusion of rehabilitation and public safety. Through the use of thematic nodes, I can observe more clearly staff and inmate experiences, and determine if they intersect. There were patterns found in discussing topics like MCI-Framingham (e.g., *WIT* staff observed unprofessional behavior there, and the inmates spoke of feeling disrespected while incarcerated there). This intersection of ideas is evidence of the coherence and compatibility of staff perceptions of the delivery of the *WIT* program and inmates' experience of it. This high level of symmetry contributes to the organizational culture of *WIT*, which appears to foster the overarching theme of "relational recovery" -- repairing the broken connections caused by trauma and abuse, criminality and incarceration. Moreover, it seems that because staff and inmate experiences are so highly aligned, unhealthy inmate connections are not only being repaired, but, in fact, healthy connections between staff and inmates are being made. Arguably, this is at the core of the relational recovery that happens at *WIT*, and may explain the program's favorable outcomes.

### **Staff Focus Groups**

A total of seven (7) employees participated in the staff focus groups conducted on two separate days. This is about one third of the total staff at the

*WIT* facility. Six of the employees identified themselves as white, and one stated she was Hispanic. Three held Master's Degrees, two had Bachelor's degrees, and the remaining two had high school diplomas. All but one of the employees were female. The employees were experienced practitioners. The average number of years spent working in corrections was about 11. The mean number of years spent working in the *WIT* program was approximately 3.5. Job responsibilities were evenly distributed – 3 participants were custodial officers, 2 were in non-uniformed positions, and two were in management roles (the Director and Asst. Director of the facility). Four staff members were married and three were single.

I found a high degree of consensus among staff members concerning the goals of the program, their assessment of whether *WIT* is effective, and why they perceive the program to be successful. There was universal agreement that the primary goal of the program is to prepare offenders for community reentry upon completion of their sentences. This is reflective of the rehabilitative ideal of corrections. This preparation for reentry was believed to enhance public safety, rather than being “soft on crime” or “coddling criminals.” Defying conventional liberal and conservative categories, staff members appeared to favor an approach that could aptly be labeled progressive. They clearly believed in holding offenders to a high degree of accountability, while simultaneously recognizing the importance of issues such as recovery from substance abuse, developing employment and educational opportunities, and establishing healthy family ties.

Through the qualitative method, I was able to identify four (4) major themes in the staff focus groups:

1. Female Offenders as an Underserved Population
2. The Fusion of Rehabilitation and Public Safety
3. Seeing Change
4. The Importance of Relationship

These themes we explore in more detail below.

**Theme 1 – Female Offenders as an Underserved Population – “*It is imperative for us to open a facility like this because male inmates have been afforded these opportunities for years.*” (Employee D).**

In her book *The Invisible Woman: Gender, Crime, and Justice*, Joanne Belknap (2003) documents the fact that the female offender has been forgotten by criminologist and criminal justice practitioners. This invisibility is more than theoretical. Some correctional practitioners, like the Essex County Sheriff, have noticed the dearth of attention paid to female offenders. In responding to the question, “What were the factors that contributed to the establishment of the *Women in Transition* Program?” - - there was general acknowledgement by the staff that female offenders in Massachusetts had limited options once sentenced to a term of incarceration. This was the perception of Essex County officials prior to opening the program, and also of other actors in the criminal justice system, specifically judges who were sensitive to the needs of female offenders and concerned about their own limited sentencing options. As one respondent noted:

*When the Sheriff and I initially thought about the concept, we had met with local judges and one of the comments was that judges needed an alternative to incarceration. Another comment was, especially from the female judges, that it was very hard to send some women to jail because they didn't think that they all belonged at MCI-Framingham. So that was pretty much the backbone as to why it started and why it is imperative for us to open up a facility like this because the male offenders have been afforded these opportunities for years. The women were being sent to Framingham and it wasn't fair for them not to benefit from a program like this (Employee D).*

In the same vein, another employee added:

*WIT wanted to get involved in providing the same opportunity that men have. Our men inmates have the opportunity for programming, reentry, and what not. We wanted to afford the same opportunity to our female population as well (Employee E).*

Another employee spoke more pragmatically about female offenders in Massachusetts, stating, *"The population isn't going away so you have to do something about it"* (Employee A).

Serving a population that had few opportunities seems to have contributed to a sense of innovation and a problem-solving orientation among the WIT staff.

One employee, speaking about the Sheriff and a key administrator involved in the opening of WIT, stated:

*I think they had a willingness to be innovative and try new things. They weren't scared to just jump right in. You know, the Sheriff worked hard to*

*get the funding for it. He was newly elected, a fresh face, and could see the need for it so he jumped right in (Employee B).*

Being associated with an innovative risk-taker who sees a problem and works hard to address it has contributed to the zeitgeist of the *WIT* organization.<sup>39</sup> The staff are not only committed to the population they serve, they have confidence that the work they do effects positive change. To serve a population that has not been afforded the opportunities typically given to male offenders puts staff in a unique position themselves. This creates a sense of being special. The staff are part of a team lead by a visionary sheriff who is willing to fill a gap and meet the needs of an underserved population.

**Theme 2 – The Fusion of Rehabilitation and Public Safety – “*To reintegrate criminal female offenders back into society, first and foremost to protect the public...*” (Employee C)**

Much of the American discourse on punishment centers on an either/or proposition: society must either punish criminals or rehabilitate them. Correctional policy reflects this dichotomy. From the 1950’s through the 1970’s, the rehabilitation model dominated correctional policy and practice, but support for this approach began to wane with the publication of Martinson’s (1974) article, proclaiming that when it comes to rehabilitating offenders “nothing works.” The 1980’s saw a full blown imprisonment binge, emphasizing the custodial model of corrections (Stemen, 2007). This was accompanied by

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<sup>39</sup> Most Massachusetts counties do not make the needs of female offenders a priority. They are satisfied with the current arrangement in which county-sentenced female prisoners are housed at MCI-Framingham. Essex County was unique in seeking the funds to establish a minimum security correctional center for women.

significant growth in correctional expenditures, and the building and filling of hard cells while community beds disappeared. The Massachusetts Department of Correction Advisory Council Final Report, commonly known as the Harshbarger Report (Harshbarger, 2005), notes:

Between 1994 and 2004, the percentage of Massachusetts inmates in minimum security facilities declined from 23% to 11%, and the percentage of inmates in maximum security facilities increased from 9% to 19%. These figures greatly exceed national averages, and the Department has yet to reverse the disturbing Massachusetts trend. In fact, since 2002, the Department has closed five medium and minimum facilities (21).

Amid the clamor for retribution, the staff voices at *WIT* are saying something dramatically different. Regardless of their position within the facility (uniformed officer, treatment provider, administrator), almost every staff member appears to embrace the notion of rehabilitation as a pathway to public safety. No one spoke of punishment, retribution, or “just deserts” as a goal of *WIT*. When asked the question, “What are the goals of the *Women in Transition* Program?” the responses transcended duties and roles within the facility:

*...to reintegrate criminal female offenders back into society, first and foremost to protect the public (Employee C).*

*Employee: I believe it is correcting negative behaviors as well as reducing recidivism rates for the women that come into the Women in Transition*

*Program (Employee F).*

*Author: What would you say would be an example of negative behavior?*

*Employee: I would say habits that they have had outside of Women in Transition. Things that have happened that brought them here. I think we should be correcting that negative behavior (Employee F).*

The next comment about the goals of the *WIT* program seems to support the notion that healthy relationships are key to the women's success and are a priority for reentry planning alongside employment:

*I would say providing them necessary tools-that are good-that they would need to get them back on the streets, working on their self esteem and confidence, getting them jobs or working on maintaining their jobs. ... we put them in a healthy and supportive environment which they are not used to prior to coming to jail. We help to get them back with their family and help them with their children. (Employee G).*

This theme contrasts sharply with what a *WIT* staffer, who went to MCI-Framingham to screen potential *WIT* participants, encountered there:

*I have seen on occasion, heard on occasion, the way some of the women are spoken to [at MCI-Framingham] and it is not very favorable. No one needs to call you a "no good tramp." If you hear it enough you are going to believe it.... You are going to shut down and go back to the old you. I think it plays a big part [in their reoffending] (Employee B).*

This observation is an example of what is described as the "pains of

imprisonment.” Correctional facilities are designed to punish offenders by stripping them of their liberty, but they often take on additional attributes that make the incarceration experience even more isolating, stressful, and frightening. Prison staff attitudes can play an important role. They can undermine inmates’ attempts to correct the behaviors that landed them in prison in the first place. Most women entering prison have personal histories of trauma, abuse, and violence. For change to occur, healing is necessary and this requires a context of safety and empowerment (Herman, 1992). When women recount their experiences of incarceration, they describe a deprivation of liberty that is often compounded by custodial staff who foster an environment of neglect and fear (Pogrebin & Dodge, 2001). *WIT* is different. The *WIT* employees appear to respond to the inmates in ways that do not exacerbate the “pains of imprisonment.” For example, when staff speak to the inmates, they do so respectfully. According to one employee, being spoken to politely is a new experience for many inmates, regardless of whether they have been previously incarcerated:

*A lot of them have never had a human being speak to them in a kind way by saying “thank you, do you need help with anything” or “are you feeling okay today?” These are just the normal, everyday questions you ask your friends or family. They find it very odd and I think it helps to build their self esteem (Employee B).*

The employee's observation of an inmate "shutting down and going back to the old you," may suggest a protective response to avoid being retraumatized by verbal abuse (*no good tramp*), rather than a sign of being entrenched in a deviant lifestyle (*going back to the old you*). If the pains of imprisonment are a revictimizing experience, they will take on much greater significance when the inmate is a trauma survivor. They may, in fact, defeat an offender's effort to effect change. The *WIT* program is designed to deliver a humane balance of accountability and rehabilitative programming, all in the name of reducing future criminal behavior and enhancing public safety.

**Theme 3 – Seeing Change – “*I’ve seen women come through here, leave, and do very well with their lives.*” (Employee G)**

I asked staff members if they believe the *Women in Transition* Program is effective. In answering affirmatively, most staff members cited observable changes in participants' behaviors. For staff, the evidence that *WIT* works was grounded in the notion that “seeing is believing.” This comment from a staff member underscores how behavior begins to change during the program and continues after release:

*I see their transition within the facility until they leave, and when they leave I see the progression there because we do allow women to come back six months after their release and share their stories with the women who are currently here. I recently went to a graduation of a woman that was here-incarcerated-she left here and went to another program and*

*graduated from that program. She now has a job, training to be a manager and I have seen her self esteem go from way down here to up here. So I have seen various women come through and I have definitely seen the effect that it has had on their life. (Employee B)*

Another staff member, a correction officer, states that the program puts the offender on a trajectory that allows her to continue the positive changes that WIT helps to initiate:

*I've seen more women in this facility come in unhealthy and leave healthy, positive, and willing to address issues. A lot of them are here for abuse of alcohol or drugs and other abuses in their life and they are taught to deal with that stuff. In turn, it leaves them here healthy with a positive feeling. (Employee A)*

According to staff, to succeed in WIT, a client must be motivated to make good use of program resources. The employees are convinced that the program is beneficial as long as the participant is willing to use the knowledge and skills she learns while at the center:

*It [WIT] is effective for some but not effective for all. You have to want to be here. You have to have a need and a desire to want to remain sober. We can't only give you the tools to succeed – we can meet you half way (Employee A).*

Staff want inmates to be motivated and ready for change almost immediately upon arrival. Staff deeply believe in the value of the program and are anxious for

participants to “buy in” as quickly as possible. Yet, in the inmate focus groups, many participants spoke explicitly about *not* being motivated until after they have had ample opportunity to settle into their surroundings and their daily routines. What is the explanation for this apparent disconnect in expectation and experience? Though staff did not discuss this explicitly, it seems that the explanation lies in the relational approach to the offender. In the inmate focus groups, participants state how the program “grows on them.” I believe what they mean when they say this is that once they begin to feel connected to the program, the staff, and each other in a healthy, safe, caring way, their motivation for change is fueled. As we will see in the excerpts below, this connection comes about through the dignity, compassion, and respect the staff demonstrate toward the participants.

**Theme 4 – The Importance of Relationship – “*Wow, you speak to us like human beings.*” (Employee A paraphrasing a program participant)**

When staff spoke of meaningful program participation and successful offender reentry, they mentioned the significance of the offender maintaining sobriety and finding employment, but they also recognized the importance of relationships. Relationships and healthy bonding were exhibited in three ways – on an individual basis between employee and inmate; from a program perspective in terms of addressing relationship needs; and post-release by extending a helping,

supportive hand after the inmate's sentence has expired.

There was healthy bonding on the individual level. *WIT* employees understood at the most basic level that even though the program was created to serve offenders (i.e. prostitutes, thieves, and drug dealers) their clientele were, first and foremost, human beings:

*They are a name, a face, a person with a family, a person with a criminal record, a personal life that we think about. We know if you have visits or if you don't have visits. We know Christmas is coming so let's try to get some donations. We know your mother passed away two months ago so it will be kind of hard on you. You are not just a number (Employee B).*

*A lot of them [program participants] will say, "wow, you speak to us like human beings." You are a human being and you deserve that right. Until you take it to a different level [act in disruptive ways], you deserve that right (Employee A).*

Because the facility is small and the average amount of time an offender spends in residence is about three months, there is ample opportunity for interaction and familiarity. However, professional boundaries are not violated<sup>40</sup> and healthy relationships can be created:

*...this place is so small that the interaction between the staff and the inmate is very close knit but not over the top. You don't find those things in the larger facilities where there is not a lot of interaction. The officers*

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<sup>40</sup> The American Correctional Association issues a professional code of ethics that governs staff/inmate interactions. From sharing personal information with inmates, like home addresses and phone numbers, to engaging in sexual relationships, they are considered violations of not only the code, but Department regulations, as well. All staff are trained in these policies. See <http://www.aca.org/pastpresentfuture/ethics.asp> for a complete version of the code.

*are extremely positive, they do a great job here and I think the inmates really appreciate that...* (Employee C).

There is a high staff to inmate ratio. As a result, employees may notice small changes in inmate behavior, attitudes, and even dress, which would go unnoticed in a larger facility. Staff's willingness to check in with residents in this way adds a dimension of caring to the environment that promotes healthy relationship and connection. Staff being closely attuned to behavioral changes serves a security function, as well, since slight behavioral changes could signal a potential escape, or the use of unauthorized substances. One employee talked about being able to pick up on these behavioral nuances:

*We are a small facility, so we do have the ability to get to know them. I think we talked about that prior. We can tell what's going on with them any particular day by their facial expressions, the way they are carrying themselves, or even their outfit. I think that it is a benefit to us that we have a small population so that we can get involved. We know if you have visits, or a tough day. We get to spend a little bit, not a huge block, of time, to have conversations and find out what is going on, to help them the best that you can. You may not have the answer, but it's just letting them talk to you. Just listen! Sometimes that is all they are looking for* (Employee A).

Custodial staff occupy paradoxical positions in correctional facilities.

They are expected to be monitors and disciplinarians, as well as nurturers and

counselors (Tracy, 2004). They struggle to balance the security needs of the facility with humane attributes like kindness, courtesy, and empathy. In most correctional facilities, the disciplinarians trump the nurturers, due to institutional culture rather than individual-level differences (Tewksbury & Collins, 2006). However, at *WIT*, a low-security prison, the distinctions are not so sharply drawn. The officers are able, if not expected, to blend custody and treatment roles. Male and female officers serve as positive role models for the inmates, yet the female employees emphasized the importance of having men work in the program. Staff believe it is essential that the clients have an opportunity to interact with men who are not trying to harm them physically or emotionally. One employee spoke of the inmates' treatment by males on the outside versus male staff in the *WIT* program:

*If they were still treated like how they were treated on the street...you know the male officers here play a big role. The males in their life, most of the time, are abusive or the ones they are running drugs for. So I believe the male officers here play a big role as far as showing them that they can have males in their lives who don't want anything from them, and that they can be treated very well (Employee B).*

On a personal level, healthy relationships are supported at *WIT* because staff, especially custodial officers, maintain professional boundaries, while showing empathy toward the offenders. The uniformed staff work collaboratively with the treatment providers in the overall management of the program. One example is the work release review board comprised of both custodial and

treatment employees. The board assesses a participant's readiness for employment taking into account not only disciplinary infractions, but also progress toward treatment goals. This multidisciplinary approach gives officers a glimpse into the offender in ways not normally available to security personnel. These added insights allow officers to contribute to the relational culture at *WIT*. Thus, the treatment program is supported, rather than criticized for being soft on criminals.

On a programmatic level, *WIT* understands the importance of relationships. Healthy staff/inmate relationships create an opportunity for collaboration. Collaboration is a form of empowerment that is "essential to recovery from the overwhelming fear and helplessness that is the legacy of victimization (Elliott, et al., 2005). Because *WIT* values and respects its clients, it invites them to improve facility programming and development. This inspires a sense of ownership among participants:

*There are also peer-led groups where they can feel like they are a part of the program, too. We always take feedback from them and want to make it their program. If they feel like they are a part of it and they created it, it will be more effective (Employee C).*

The program emphasizes substance abuse recovery, but clinical staff are cognizant of the role that relationships play. An exchange that occurred when I asked if the *WIT* program addresses issues of relationships in the women's lives produced this response:

*I do domestic violence groups but I also incorporate what is a healthy relationship. A lot of them don't even understand what that is. I do a lot of focus on that (Employee E).*

*Author: How is that tied in with the substance abuse programming?*

*Well it's just a part of this program. A lot of times when they are sober, they start to gain clarity. They begin to think about why they are in these relationships and is it healthy. A lot of times they are in these relationships and when they are under the influence or getting high they don't think about it. Gaining more clarity to see that "I don't need this stuff or I don't have to put up with this" is how it should be. I guess that can be tied to it. Also, we have a communications group to help them learn how to approach conflicts with each other that is going to carry on into relationships in their lives (Employee E).*

Employee E's response illustrates how the principles of relational theory are explicitly integrated into *WIT* programming. Covington (1998) suggests that women may begin to use substances to "alter themselves to fit the relationships available" (150). She bases this idea on Miller's (1990) premise that if a woman cannot find mutuality in a relationship, she transforms herself to maintain the relationship. At *WIT*, we see this theoretical idea emerge as a reality in women's lives. When sobriety begins to take hold, there is movement away from the non-mutual relationship toward to a more mutual, empathic one.

When staff were asked to identify the goals of the *Women in Transition* program, the notion of relationship, especially with family and children, was key:

*I think there are many goals [of the program]. One of them being, getting them back into society, helping them get assigned back with their children, if they have been separated from their children, substance abuse issues, self improvement, helping them finance their money so when they do get back out into the community and start working they can be self-sufficient (Employee C).*

*We get housing for them. We put them in a healthy and supportive environment which they are not used to prior to coming to jail. We help to get them back with their family and help them with their children (Employee D).*

*Our goal is to successfully reintegrate someone from the state prison in Framingham; bring them here in a minimum pre-release environment; re-establish bonds with their families, children, parents (Employee A).*

Clearly, the program focuses on criminogenic factors like substance use and unemployment, but it also understands the need for “relational recovery” with loved ones in the community. Family connections are given just as much import as the traditional risk factors of addiction and joblessness.

One of the most intriguing aspects of *WIT* is that staff encourage offenders to stay connected with the program after their release, whether by providing informal updates of their progress, or seeking support during difficult times. Officially, the only way back into the program is through reincarceration, but staff

are available informally in limited, yet important, ways:

*If they needed something they could come back to us and [we'd] still be able to help them where we can ethically and without crossing any boundaries. Just being able to offer any services post-release as well... We are still here to help them. They are a little more independent but we are still able to intervene. If something happens, they can come back and say "look this just isn't working out and I feel I need to come back in." It's perfect! (Employee A)*

*...it's 3am, you are out on the street, have nowhere to go - you have our number and you can call us. Which I don't think a lot of other correctional facilities are like that. Not to say they should take advantage of that, but I think that they know that we are here. (Employee B).*

Not only is the *WIT* door left open allowing those who have completed the program<sup>41</sup> to return for informal support, but staff at *WIT* will leave the facility and show symbolic support for program graduates when opportunities arise:

*One of our ex-offenders just graduated from the \_\_\_\_\_ program. So we went into the State House - it was M\_\_\_\_\_, myself, and another officer and we were the only three people there for this lady. (Employee B)*

There is an emphasis on relationships in every aspect of the *WIT* program -- on an interpersonal level between employee and client, on a programmatic level in service delivery, and on a symbolic level post release. This approach provides a continuum of relational care that appears to contribute to the facility's culture of

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<sup>41</sup> Participants who return to MCI-Framingham for disciplinary reasons do not revisit *WIT*, either formally or informally, but might be considered for placement during a subsequent incarceration.

“relational recovery.”

The themes that emerge from the staff’s discussion of the program show an organization that fosters “relational recovery.” It does so by recognizing that the program serves a population that few seem to care about. This perspective fosters a humane approach to the offenders on the part of all staff – treatment providers, administrators, and security personnel. Within the program there is a commitment to the ideal that rehabilitative and reintegrative efforts create attitudinal and behavioral changes in the offender that reduce crime and promote public safety. There is consensus among the staff about the agency’s mission, and there is a high level of confidence in the work they perform. When program graduates return to the facility to share their success stories, staff, program graduates, and current clients are all enriched. This practice provides a sense of hope for the inmates, and is tangible evidence for staff that the work they do is effective.

“Healthy connection” is the driving force behind relational theory (Covington, 1998; Gilligan, 1993; Miller, 1986). It seems to play a major role in the *Women in Transition* program. This is evidenced by the program’s safe, respectful environment, the empowerment focus of the treatment groups, and the empathic staff attitudes toward the offenders. The program lays the groundwork for recovery in ways that are responsive to the needs of female offenders who have suffered trauma.

None of this is to suggest that *WIT* is a panacea. Not all female offenders are trauma survivors; and even among those who are, the psychological wounds in some may be too deep to respond to trauma-informed treatment delivered in a correctional environment. According to Baugh, Bull, & Cohen (2008), borderline personality disorder (BPD), a severe emotional instability, is considerably higher among the female offender population compared to both incarcerated males (by almost 2 to 1) and the non-incarcerated population in general, but exact figures are not known. The researchers note that women with borderline personalities have extreme difficulty with interpersonal relationships and can easily alienate those who seek to help them. They point to dialectical behavior therapy as the most effective psychotherapeutic approach to this disorder. It is intensive psychiatric care often requiring in-patient hospitalization, day hospital treatment, and adjunctive family therapy.<sup>42</sup> Each of these options falls outside the realm of traditional correctional mental health services and treatment, although it appears that a substantial proportion of female offenders could benefit from it.

### **Inmate Focus Groups**

A total of 23 inmates participated in four focus groups over a 10-month period in 2006 and 2007. Forty-four per cent of the participants were single, 31% were married, 19% were divorced, and 6% (only one inmate) were separated. Eighty-four percent described themselves as white, 5% Black, and 11% Hispanic. Seventy-three percent reported having children. The average number of children

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<sup>42</sup> According to the BPD Resource Center, BPD is a severe disorder characterized by unstable moods, suicidal ideation, and extreme impulsivity. See <http://www.bpdresourcecenter.org/what.htm> for more detailed information on this disorder.

is 2, rounded up from 1.84. The mean age was 39. The focus group sample is generally representative of the larger study population, except for marital status. Thirty-one percent of the focus group participants stated that they were married, compared to 9% of the study population. It is unclear why the discrepancy is so large. It may simply be due to the nature of nonrandom sampling; focus group members were volunteers. The recruitment poster described a focus group about reentry and relationships. Married inmates may have been particularly attracted to this description. Focus group participants were, on average, six years older than the study population. This difference might be related to marital status. We could assume that older women would be more likely to be married than younger ones.

The table below summarizes sample characteristics:

***Table 4.1 – Demographic Comparisons between the Study Population and Focus Group Sample***

	<b>Study Population N = 380</b>	<b>Focus Group Sample N = 23</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
• Single	58%	44%
• Married	<b>9%</b>	<b>31%</b>
• Divorced	19%	19%
• Separated	8%	6%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
• White	76%	84%
• Hispanic	15%	11%
• Black	8%	5%
<b>Mothers</b>		
• Yes	75%	73%
• No	25%	27%
Mean age	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>
Mean # of children	2	2

Inmates who were within 30 days of release via sentence expiration or parole were invited to volunteer to participate in the focus groups.<sup>43</sup> No compensation was offered for inmate participation, nor were penalties imposed on inmates declining to participate. A total of four (4) groups were conducted, typically with six offenders per group, and totaling 23 participants. Due to the stringent timetable dictated by the operational needs of the program, the meetings lasted no more than 60 minutes. To protect confidentiality, I identify speakers by letter. See Appendix 18 for the focus group schedules and dates of participation for each speaker.

Using the same analytic process as the staff focus groups, four themes were uncovered in the inmate focus groups. They were:

1. Choosing WIT as an Avoidance of the Prison Experience
2. Embracing Opportunities for Change
3. The Programming Experience as Empowerment
4. The Uniformed Staff's Role in Connection and Relationship

**Theme 1 – Choosing WIT as an Avoidance of the Prison Experience – “*I just wanted to get out of that (jailhouse) environment.*” (Inmate M)**

Though the focus group questioning did not ask for comparisons of *WIT* and MCI-Framingham (Refer to Appendix 5 - List of Focus Group Questions), responses frequently led down this path. This may be inevitable, since MCI-

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<sup>43</sup> All inmate focus group participants were incarcerated at the time of the interviews. Their views are expressed without benefit of time spent in the community and separated from the program.

Framingham is the feeder institution for the *Women in Transition* program<sup>44</sup> and, as a medium security institution, stands in stark contrast to a minimum security pre-release center.

The first question asked simply, “Why did you agree to participate in the *WIT* program?” The dominant motivations seem to have been to avoid the state prison experience rather than to embrace *WIT*.

*I wanted to participate so I could see my son because I did not want him to come to Framingham to see me (Inmate Q).*

Author – *Why would you not allow him to visit you at Framingham?*

*I think that is too much to have in a child’s memory. It is a lot more rigid than the *WIT* program. It is surrounded by bricks and barbed wire. They [visitors] have to go through a metal detector and be searched. I don’t think my son should have to be subjected to that (Inmate Q).*

The above comment illuminates how routine security procedures contribute to the non-relational nature of a secure prison. Even when visiting programs exist in walled institutions, some offenders do not avail themselves of them, potentially creating conflict in the offender’s mind about what is in the best interests of her child – visiting or not visiting mom, an almost tragic choice.

*Framingham was depressing. There was nothing to do. You just sat around all day. If I went to school it was an hour and a half. I didn’t want to walk around. I just didn’t feel motivated. When I got here [WIT] they do things. Some say that it was hard, but it was worth working for. So anything has got to be better than sitting around being in a rut; not going*

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<sup>44</sup> The Essex County Sheriff’s Department has an agreement with the Federal Bureau of Prisons to provide pre-release beds for federally-sentenced women as well, but these offenders were excluded from the study due to the inability to access federal criminal history data.

*anywhere just sitting around feeling sorry for yourself getting fat and lazy. So I saw my opportunity to do something worthwhile. This [WIT] provides me with that (Inmate O).*

Inmate O speaks of not only the boredom of poorly-resourced institutions, but also the sense of desperation that accompanies it. This comment illuminates how a prisoner may be motivated to make personal changes, but is not given the tools to do so. Ironically, her comment about feeling sorry for herself contradicts one of the very basic goals of punishment – to induce remorse for one’s crime. In her statement we can discern a sense of her being the victim.

Inmate U acknowledges that *WIT* is a “jail” yet prefers it over MCI-Framingham because of the opportunities it affords her:

*I agreed to come to WIT, honestly, to get out of Framingham. I have been in pre-release before and being inside the institution there is not much you can do as far as outside resources. I knew I would have a better chance, as far as my release, from the WIT program... What I have learned, as far as being at WIT, there is so much of a drastic change than being at Framingham. As far as violent lives and the girls there, WIT is just a much better environment. It’s a jail but doesn’t seem so bad in some way. (Inmate U).*

It is not remarkable that women would choose a small pre-release center over a large, crowded medium security institution.<sup>45</sup> What the women said about their time at Framingham is consistent with the literature on women’s prisons – they

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<sup>45</sup> According to the Harshbarger Report (2004), MCI-Framingham is designed to house 388 women, but currently holds over 600.

are not family friendly (Fishman, 1982; Myers, et. al., 1999) and they are under-resourced (WPA, 2006; Kates, et. al., 2005). Further, the non-relational aspects of prisons undermine the prospects for successful community reentry, which depend, to some extent, on reestablishing healthy family connections (Christian, et. al., 2006; Sullivan, et. al, 2002; Hairston, 2001; Hairston, et. al., 2004) and receiving treatment to address this population's risks and needs (Dowden & Andrews, 1999; Lowenkamp, et. al., 2006).

Another explanation for wanting to avoid MCI-Framingham is that imprisonment, rightly or wrongly, is a traumatizing experience and, thus, inherently non-relational. This fact has serious implications for a population with high rates of experiencing abuse. Incarceration is a continuation of the abusive experience; it would therefore hold that women (and men, for that matter) would seek to avoid it. In the comments below, inmates describe MCI-Framingham as degrading, frightening, and dehumanizing. It seems unlikely that any sort of relational recovery can occur under those circumstances. Instead, the struggles and conditions inmates bring with them to the prison could very well be exacerbated. The *Women in Transition* program ameliorated some of these effects:

*Framingham took my humanity and WIT gave it back. It just made me feel human again (Inmate C).*

*I just wanted to get out of jail. I wanted to wear my own clothes (laughter). I wanted to just be in a normal setting. That is the reason I went [to WIT] (Inmate M).*

In comparing her Framingham experience with *WIT*, another woman offered:

*Author: So how did that experience [MCI-Framingham] differ from WIT? Ungodly scary! I did not like it at all. It was dirty. The people were scary (Inmate A).*

Another woman described her Framingham experience this way:

*Prison is stupid. To me, I'm at a loss for words as to what goes on there. Their mentality.... (Inmate B).*

*Author: What was their mentality?*

*They were degrading and they do a lot to you (Inmate B).*

*Author: Are you saying the staff is degrading?*

*The staff is very degrading (Inmate B).*

This commentary suggests a number of things. First, inmates seek to avoid MCI-Framingham out of concern for their families, whether it is the difficulty they will experience in trying to visit, or the impact of entering a prison on a child's psyche. The literature shows that it is difficult for prisoners to maintain meaningful contact with family members for reasons that include distance, unpleasant visiting conditions, and hesitancy on the part of the child's caregiver to allow the child to visit a parent in jail (Cunningham & Baker, 2003; Hairston, et al., 2004; Fishman, 1983). Being at *WIT* mitigated some of those impacts. For

many women, it was closer to home; others noted that the physical structure and custody level of *WIT* did not subject their children to invasive entrance procedures.

Another finding is that a negative stimulus (not wanting to stay at MCI-Framingham) produced a positive effect (fully participating in *WIT* programming). Soon after the women were transferred to *WIT*, they became engaged in the programming and were motivated to make personal changes. As noted in the staff focus groups, some employees were concerned that if motivation were absent, successful reentry would be unlikely. What the inmates appear to be saying is that some of them arrived lacking interest in the programming, but once they were there, they saw the value in the services the program had to offer.

*At first, it was just to get out of Framingham, but then you go into the groups and they start to kind of grow on you. Yeah, they started to grow on me and I just kind of went with it (Inmate D).*

Inmate D's words are deceptively simple but send a clear message about *WIT*, relationships, and connection. When a treatment group "grows on you" and you "just kind of go with it," it indicates that motivation is present and change is beginning to take hold. At *WIT*, almost all of the treatment occurs in groups – a relationship-based model where the sharing of experiences is validating, thereby leading to empathy, mutuality, and empowerment. These elements form the basis

of healthy connections (Miller, 1986). Further underlying this attitudinal change is the program's focus on healthy relationships and its safe, respectful environment.

**Theme 2 – Embracing Opportunities for Change – “I’m not selling drugs but I am selling blankets!” (Inmate A)**

The previous section focuses on the fact that *WIT* inmates were more eager to leave the negative environment of MCI-Framingham than to embrace the *WIT* program. However, once the women settled into *WIT*, the program “started to grow” on them. When asked the question “What do you hope to gain from participating in the *WIT* program?” the respondents focused most heavily on three areas – sobriety:

*Recovery is a big thing for me...recovery wasn't really something I was geared toward, but now that I am here I am learning a lot about myself and how to stay clean. Hopefully, I will learn how to gain a better sense of recovery (Inmate T).*

*Now that I've been here, the program is geared toward recovery, which is something I need. So as far as recovery [is concerned], WIT is a better place than Framingham (Inmate T).*

self-esteem building:

*With the skills that I have, that I thought I wouldn't use, through WIT I can do that. I just wanted to try and get back on top of my career (Inmate V).*

*They [WIT staff] are very helpful with helping you further your education and stuff like that. It [WIT] helps women get a job, allows them to be more independent and gives them more self worth and bring up their self esteem a little more (Inmate Q).*

and parenting skills:

*...they [WIT staff] are trying to help us be better parents and mothers as well. They have a couple of parenting classes there. It can be difficult, but it is just helpful to see other moms (Inmate U).*

These responses were expected, since the facility considers itself, first and foremost, an addiction recovery program with a clientele composed predominantly of women who are substance abusers and mothers. Many other topics are addressed in the treatment groups, too. Among the inmates' comments were:

*I hope to gain more knowledge of my criminal thinking so I don't repeat my behaviors ((Inmate Q).*

This comment refers to a program called "Errors in Thinking." It is a cognitive-behavioral approach that identifies the common thoughts behind offender decision-making, such as blaming others or believing that responsible living lacks excitement and satisfaction

*What I hope to get out of WIT, well, I am already accomplishing it. I am going for my GED, and [staff member H] has got me into some classes because I want to start a small business when I leave (Inmate H).*

Author - *In what?*

*I'm not selling drugs but I am selling blankets! (Inmate H).*

(Group laughter)

Education is a priority at *Women in Transition*. If a participant lacks a high school diploma, she is required to enroll in *WIT*'s GED program. According to the facility's annual reports, 10% of those in need of a GED passed the test in 2004, and 24% passed in 2005.<sup>46</sup> As Inmate H notes, formal educational provides her with a viable pathway out of crime. Her observation is consistent with much of the literature on the reduced likelihood of recidivism and participation in educational programs (Rose, 2007).

The next two quotes are general expressions of *WIT* as a place to make personal changes. They do not identify specific program activities, but rather speak to the totality of the *WIT* program experience.

*I heard that coming to WIT there's a lot of opportunities. I'm trying to take full advantage of them. I am coming to the program to better my life. So I could go back home – or wherever I may go – and be a better person. Rather than staying in Framingham and coming out an angry, bitter person, I wanted to better my outlook on life (Inmate F).*

*I wanted to come to WIT. When I got in trouble, I wanted to take the time [prison sentence] that I was getting to change my life. Also, WIT offered*

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<sup>46</sup> The variability in passing rates may be explained by a number of factors, such as the participants' prior educational experience and overall academic functioning, as well as their length of stay in *WIT*. Women with shorter sentences to serve have less time to prepare for and take the GED test.

*me a lot of things I really needed to do, since I didn't work for a majority of the time, and I really just wanted to work on myself. At Framingham, I have been in and out of the system a lot, so at WIT I can finally make some changes (Inmate G).*

Inmates F and G discuss nebulous goals (“to better my life” and “to work on myself”) rather than acquiring a particular skill or credential. Despite their generalizations, there appear to be important insights gained, such as realizing how seizing opportunities can reduce anger and bitterness and knowing the importance of setting aside time for self care. Clearly, these statements are indicative of about empowerment and esteem – two qualities nurtured by *WIT* and further discussed in the section to follow.

At *WIT* what is learned in the groups and workshops is reinforced outside of the treatment setting by the custodial staff. This finding is consistent with data from the staff focus groups. The inmates described positive and supportive dealings with staff, regardless of position and role inside the organization. Thus, it appears that the context in which programming and treatment are offered, not just the types and quality of treatment, may play a critical role in the re-education of the offender.

**Theme 3 – The Programming Experience as Empowerment – “*They don't tell me that I have to do this and I have to do that. They say these are your options and take a choice.*” (Inmate B)**

Empowerment models are relational. They require mutuality and collaboration on the part of the treatment provider and the client. Some researchers contend they are the preferred therapeutic approach for persons with trauma histories (Elliott, et. al., 2005) because abuse “survivors consistently report an overwhelming sense of helplessness” (Herman: 1992:98). A thread that runs through the fabric of the *WIT* program is empowerment. The clinical staff are careful not to force specific coping strategies or goals onto the clients. Instead, they offer an array of options, allowing the women to consider them, and then choose the course of action that is most suitable. Typical comments are:

*It's not like drilled into your head that you have to do this, you can't re-offend, you can't get high. They give you options and they let you sit back and think about it. If you are choosing a bad option, they don't put you down for that and tell you that's wrong. They will give you the resources that you need for when that blows up in your face [laughing] (Inmate N).*

Inmate N speaks not only of empowerment, but also being given the space to make mistakes and learn from them. Because it appears the *WIT* program does not espouse a “zero tolerance” policy toward recovery and change, participants keep their fragile gains toward self-worth intact. Inmate B, below, echos the same sentiments about empowerment and personal growth.

*It is just not all about the substance abuse which most of us are here for. You get to work on yourself and step back, look at yourself and your self*

*esteem- which I think is huge. They give you something to work with and you don't necessarily have to take it, but you can (Inmate B).*

Though we are unfamiliar with the detailed, personal histories of the focus group participants, we can easily imagine some of the negative messages they might have heard over their lifetimes that have contributed to the stunted pursuits of their goals and dreams. This quote from Inmate O is especially poignant in that it depicts the power of gentle encouragement:

*I am going to business marketing seminars because I want to get back into business management. I'm up for taking college courses now. I can see now that I don't have to just stay stagnant. I know they [others outside of WIT] said I was too old. It has been 30 years since I have been in jail and not school. I just didn't want to go. [At WIT] they said that I could do it and I did it. I was very surprised. They didn't push me but they said "yes you can do it". They gave me a chance to reinforce what I feel about myself. They don't over blow it or blow smoke up your butt or anything. They just tell you, "Yes, you can give yourself a chance." Well I didn't think I could, but they did, and I appreciate that (Inmate O).*

In Chapter 1, I discuss the therapeutic community approach to recovery programming in correctional settings. As previously noted, this model uses confrontation as a treatment tool that has been shown to be ineffective with, and possibly harmful to, women with trauma histories. Inmate P contrasts her past experiences with that model to the type of treatment she receives at WIT.

*I have been in the intense programs in Massachusetts. Fortunately, it's not like you sit down in a circle and they drag you down and build you up and all that crap that they thought was so good for you. They don't do that. They allow you to follow your own thought process (Inmate P).*

These excerpts are examples of inmates expressing feelings of empowerment. They portray the counselors as nonjudgmental, contributing to an atmosphere where the women are encouraged to make, and thereby own, their choices. The inmate quoted below is especially articulate in her description of the approach at WIT, because she speaks of defiance – an attitude that is rarely, if ever, acceptable in a prison environment. However, within the realm of treatment, defiance may play an important part in attempts at behavioral change:

*They would give me things that I would need but they wouldn't condemn me. I think that is a big part because in places I was before I felt like I had to do things because they were telling me I had to do it. I was very defiant. WIT has allowed me to be defiant, think about my deed, and go through the entire process of thinking whether it was the right thing to do (Inmate N).*

Lastly, inmates know that staff believe in their power to change. This faith appears to strengthen the bonds that are forged at WIT.

*Whoever had the idea [of WIT] - my hat goes off to them. For them to have faith in me, it makes me want to keep in touch with them and let them know I am doing well. They are like my family and that is the staff (Inmate O).*

**Theme 4 – The Uniformed Staff’s Role in Connection and Relationship – “I love all the officers. They are very nice. They treat us good.” (Inmate C)**

Programming carried out in an environment that is disrespectful toward its clientele can be severely undermined. In this regard, custodial staff play a critical role in the atmosphere within *WIT*. Generally, inmates expect officers to be disciplinarians, who are detached from their treatment needs, and not empathetic to their struggles. However, at *WIT* this dynamic is absent. Officers understand that they work in an unique correctional setting – one that is committed to treatment as well as public safety. The two comments below demonstrate that *WIT* custodial staff foster positive, healthy relationships with the inmates through compassion:

*The officers that we have are compassionate. They understand what we are trying to do and they give you that chance. They never say that you are just going to come back next month and don’t bother with you. Those words I have never heard. For everyone else who has left, I have only heard good luck and if you need us call us. I never heard that anywhere else (Inmate N).*

*They care so much about your treatment and development. They treat us with a certain level of respect that I would have no problem doing anything for them (Inmate M).*

These excerpts speak to a similar idea – respect:

*The difference between Framingham and WIT is that Framingham is horrible. I think the staff treats you like crap. I think the staff is shady and the women are shady. In WIT, they care what you do and they know your name. At Framingham it's like in and out. They [WIT staff] care what you do, but they give you a break as well. There are people that have been waiting for months to come to WIT (Inmate K).*

*I think one thing is the structure. They want to help you. They give you a job so you can make money. I also think the officers at Framingham are different from WIT. (Inmate L).*

Author: *How so?*

*At Framingham they take your stuff. Like if you're not on a bed, they come in and they do what they want. I think the environment isn't well either (Inmate L).*

The excerpts above include evidence of healthy connections and relationships between two disparate groups -- the keepers and the kept. Correctional officers are responsible for preventing escapes and maintaining order, not providing treatment, but they are “undoubtedly the key figure in the penal equation, the one on whom the whole edifice of the prison system depends” (Clear & Cole, 1994: 340). Given their crucial place in the system, and the unclear and sometimes contradictory roles that mix custody and treatment goals, it is possible for uniformed officers to make or break a correctional program. At

WIT, the officers appear to contribute substantially to the program's success.

Inmate J's quote about officers contains two of the fundamental ideas related to relational theory – empathy and mutuality:

*They are like family. They call us by our last name, but it's nice. I have been here for so long, and they give you a little bit of humanity. They don't take it away. They let you know that they are who they are and it's a hard job but they have to do it. Every once in a while they have their humanity side. One time she [an officer] came in and showed me a picture of her dog and it felt nice. It felt really good (Inmate J).*

Occasionally, officers must restrain a program participant to prepare her for transfer back to MCI-Framingham, typically for a serious rule violation. At these times, uniformed staff may be expected to act with varying degrees of aggression and/or negativity. However, inmate descriptions belie this:

*Whoever picked those officers that work at WIT did a great job. They really look after our safety. When somebody has to go back, we have to shut the doors and lock it, but the way you do involves no yelling or screaming. Nobody should feel humiliated and they don't power play. I mean it has to be hard, but they never show it on their face (Inmate N).*

Among all of the qualitative findings, Theme 4 (The Uniformed Staff's Role in Connection and Relationship) is the most powerful and intriguing because it runs counter to expectations of officer and inmate interaction. Corrections culture demands a tension and distrust between officer and inmate, since prisoners

are being held against their will, and officers are the figurative and literal force behind their confinement. Of course, a pre-release center lacks the punitive intensity of a medium security prison, but the role of the correctional officer is expected to remain the same – distant, detached, and focused on rule enforcement. In the *Women in Transition* program, the officers have a softer, more open demeanor, while still carrying out their security functions effectively. This feature, I believe, bolsters the program's effectiveness and may change the way we think about corrections in general.

The qualitative analysis offers convincing evidence that the themes of the staff and inmate focus groups intersect. Both reflect a culture of success focused on the relational needs of the female offenders. This intersection is apparent when staff speak about recognizing the population's special needs, and supporting them on their journey toward reintegration. The inmates acknowledge this support with words like "caring", "respect", and "safe" to describe the *WIT* experience. The *WIT* program closely follows the guiding principles of gender-specific programming, but the primary theoretical base for the program appears to be relational theory. The themes that emerged in both staff and inmate focus groups centered on relationship. They demonstrated how the program is carried out, both on the interpersonal and the programmatic level. We hear the inmates describe their experiences in developing healthy relationships with staff, and we hear staff talk about the compassionate approach to their work with the women at *WIT*.

Inmates' experiences of *WIT* contrast sharply with their experiences in other facilities, including both walled institutions and other low-security programs. It appears that program effectiveness is less a matter of physical environment and structure and more a matter of organizational culture. Appendix 14 diagrams this culture. The arrowed themes outside of the circles represent what *WIT* means to the staff and inmates, and how *WIT* came to be a reality in their lives. The four large circles symbolize the dominant beliefs and experiences associated with being a part of the *WIT* program. The center circle, or core, embodies the intersection of these ideas and produces the ethos of relational recovery.

## Chapter V – Discussion of Findings

The growth of the female offender population has had a variety of repercussions, ranging from an explosion in new prison construction to house this population<sup>47</sup> to a renewed scholarly interest in understanding the female criminal. This study attempts to assess the criminal justice policy response to the woman offender and to add a relevant and meaningful piece to the discourse. We know from the literature, and this study reinforced the conclusion, that the needs of the female offender are salient. She faces a complex array of troubles – victimization, substance abuse, and poverty, but is simultaneously a low-risk offender in terms of dangerousness. The wisdom of placing her behind bars, where her needs go untreated at best, and exacerbated at worst, must be questioned.

I do not suggest that female convicts should be set free. There will always be female criminals who deserve time behind bars, and our communities will be the better for it. However, no useful purpose is served when a society punishes transgressors in ways not proportional to their actions, and without regard to the social, psychological, and political context of their lives. To “punish smarter not harder” is a tall order, but not an impossible task. The evaluation of the *Women in Transition* program combined quantitative and qualitative methods using a rich data set and structured focus groups to offer a multi-dimensional view of a gender-specific correctional program. The study achieved three important research goals – description, evaluation, and explanation. The quantitative design

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<sup>47</sup> According to the American Correctional Association, there were 29 women’s prisons in 1980. By 2007, this figure had grown to 159 – a 448% increase.

provided a detailed description of the study population that included a wide range of variables related to demographic, criminal history, and psychological/social variables. The use of quantitative and qualitative data resulted in an evaluation of a gender-specific program that is valuable to correctional practitioners as an assessment of public policy. Additionally, the analytic framework provided a basis for testing relational theory as an explanation of the program's success, and it developed new ideas of how to understand and measure the effectiveness of a gender-specific program. Most importantly, I believe the findings of this study shed light on a promising model worthy of replication.

#### *Discussion of Quantitative Findings*

An important finding of this study is that the *Women in Transition* program has a success rate of 61%. Almost two-thirds of its participants were not reconvicted or reincarcerated within 18 months of their release from the program. Further, one of the most intriguing findings from the regression analysis is that if an offender completed the *WIT* program, the less likely she was to recidivate. Of all the findings, this one points to a "program effect." Without the use of a control or comparison group, it is impossible to show a causal relationship between program completion and avoiding re-offending, but the finding suggests value in completing the *WIT* program. One of the themes identified through the focus group analysis is that *WIT* participants "embraced opportunities for change." Over 60% percent of *WIT* participants did not reoffend up to 18 months after release.

This is evidence of a population that is committed to change.

Another result supporting a possible program effect is the association between criminal record and recidivism. Offenders with moderate criminal histories or worse, who complete the *Women in Transition* program, are predicted to be non-recidivists. This is an important finding and additional evidence of offender change, especially when considering *WIT* clientele are comprised mostly of substance abusers. Almost 70% of women in the study population reported “polydrug” use. This statistic does not reflect a recreational substance user. Rather, it is likely indicative of abuse or addiction – two conditions prone to chronicity and relapse, and considered risk factors for criminal behavior. If *WIT* is able to reduce subsequent criminal behavior, especially among drug abusers, this has far-reaching implications, not only for the future of criminal justice policy as it relates to women, but for public health policy as well.

Another conclusion from the statistical analysis is that mature offenders (30 years or older) had better recidivism outcomes than younger offenders. This finding is fully consistent with the literature, which notes that many offenders seem to “age out” of crime (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1993). Program officials may want to consider ways to make *WIT* a more successful program for younger offenders. One way might be to create a larger role for family involvement during the course of an offender’s placement at *WIT*. Offenders in the 17 to 21 age group comprised 30% of the study population. Though these women are adults in the

eyes of the criminal justice system, they have barely reached adulthood, and may benefit from family involvement to provide structure and support. Thirty-two percent (n = 12) of this age group were recidivists. Effective intervention at a young age can avoid significant expenditures and costs of human suffering over the lifespan of a potential career criminal and addict.

The chi square analyses showed significant correlations between recidivism and victimization history, prior mental health diagnosis, and criminal history. In some ways, this is indicative of the cycle of criminality for female offenders. In this study, 64% of the sample reported having been victimized during their childhood and/or adulthood. Traumatic experiences often result in psychological damage (Herman, 1992), so the prevalence of prior mental health diagnoses in the study (69%) comes as no surprise. Psychological dysfunction might be expressed in anti-social ways, with criminal behavior as one of the more extreme expressions along the anti-social behavior continuum. This set of risks and needs may call for long-term psychotherapeutic intervention, which is beyond what a correctional facility can be expected to provide. However, in the course of reintegrative planning, *WIT* participants could benefit from referrals to mental health practitioners who specialize in the areas of attachment, mood, and dissociative disorders – all related to trauma experiences. If these referrals are made before the participant leaves *WIT*, they could help decrease the program's termination rate of 28% and add to its overall success.

Discussion of Qualitative Findings

In this study, I conducted focus groups with two sets of key informants – *WIT* staff and participants. With staff, I sought data about the goals of the *WIT* program and employee perceptions of program effectiveness. With the participants, I wanted to understand the experience of serving time at *WIT*, and whether inmates perceived the program as catalyzing positive change in their lives. The results of this inquiry added rich detail to the study, and, more importantly uncovered a critical finding – an interactive effect between program goals as perceived by staff and inmate experiences . What staff said they delivered, i.e., a gender-specific, recovery program built on respect, dignity, and empowerment, was reflected in the participants’ descriptions of their *WIT* experiences. This finding is unique. There are competing and contradictory goals embedded in the correctional system. Uniformed staff frequently dismiss the value of treatment and, in doing so, undermine efforts toward offender rehabilitation (Kjelsberg, Skoglund, & Rustad, 2007). Likewise, program staff frequently see security staff as overbearing, and as interfering with treatment delivery. It appears the *WIT* program is able to promote security, control, and public safety, as well as treatment. The glue that cements this philosophy is the notion of healthy relationship. A relational approach suggests that groups that foster connections between people “promote psychological growth and the healing of emotional wounds” (Fedele and Harrington, 1990: 3). “Women’s sense

of self is grounded in making and maintaining relationships with others” (Fedele and Harrington, 1990: 2). The relational model further states that when an individual participates in “mutually-created and mutually enhancing” relationships (Fedele and Harrington, 1990: 2), the “five good things” result – zest, empowerment, clarity, self-worth, turning toward relationship (Miller, 1976). This notion resembles the concept of “agency”, i.e. one’s self-determination and personal power. Unlocking the inmate’s agency to act in non-criminal ways is the key to breaking the self-destructive cycle initiated by trauma and leading to substance abuse and crime. There is both quantitative and qualitative evidence that for many participants, the *Women in Transition* program breaks this cycle, or at least puts women in a better position to do so. The qualitative analysis revealed dignity, empowerment, and relationship as important themes in the lives and experiences of the *WIT* participants. It may explain the program’s success and low rate of recidivism.

#### *Blending Quantitative and Qualitative Findings*

The decision to use a mixed analytical method was based on the belief that combining two set of results would provide a clearer understanding of the *Women in Transition* program than either approach alone. We can take several conclusions from this exercise. First, offenders eligible for the *WIT* program chose to participate, but not with the goal of making positive changes in their lives. Rather, they sought out *WIT* to avoid an unpleasant prison experience. *WIT*

participants were motivated by a desire for comfort, not personal growth.

However, once in an environment that provided dignity, safety, and opportunities for learning, their motivation evolved and hardened. They began to open up in the treatment groups and to accept the routine and rigors of the program. As they addressed their addictions, criminal thinking, and maladaptive coping strategies, they consistently encountered a supportive, caring staff who empathized with their struggles. Empathy came from unexpected places, including the words and actions of the uniformed staff. The correctional officers' empathic interactions with the *WIT* clients are key in a relational view of the program. Treatment staff go home at night and on weekends, but officers are present seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Gains made in the treatment could be easily undone by an insensitive or disrespectful officer. Yet, almost three quarters of the participants remained in the *WIT* program and successfully departed, either on parole or by sentence expiration. Most were asked to come back to share their success stories.

Secondly, the participants in the *Women in Transition* program believe the program meets their needs. I do not have the post-release opinions and outcomes from the women who took part in the focus groups, but to the extent they could assess their prospects, their words reflected a range of sentiments from guarded optimism to unshakable confidence. The program emphasizes substance abuse recovery specific to women. Treatment is delivered in a way that is empowering, not preachy and confrontive. In a population with a high prevalence of personal

victimization, empowerment and self determination have been shown to be critical factors in the healing process (Covington, 1998; Herman, 1992; Miller, 1976). Once a woman begins to recover and reclaim her self esteem, there is less need to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol. Almost all of the women at *WIT* reported problems with substances (99%), yet, of those who recidivated, only 15% did so with a drug-related offense.

Staff believe that *WIT* is effective. They are firm in their conviction that public safety is best advanced by attending to what they consider the key factors associated with crime – drug addiction, victimization, low levels of education, and poverty. Employees are confident that when program participants leave *WIT*, they do so with a set of tools to help them stay sober and crime free. Staff assessments appear to be correct. Sixty-one percent (n=232) of *WIT* participants in the years 2001 through 2004 did not recidivate in the 18 months after their release.

Though the study provides a generally positive assessment, program improvements are needed in several areas. The non-completion rate is nearly 30%. Efforts should be made to determine the factors associated with non-completion. This could lead to the identification of programmatic changes to improve completion rates.

The 30% failure rate of program participants, though lower than most correctional sanctions in Massachusetts, warrants close attention, also. Recidivism table 3.1 indicates that most of the recidivists reoffend within the first 100 days

after their release. These data raise questions about the participant's readiness for reentry and the effectiveness of aftercare planning. The study did not examine the reasons behind this finding, but it may be worthwhile for *WIT* staff to pursue this line of inquiry with the *WIT* recidivists when they go to MCI-Framingham to screen potential participants. It is likely that the many *WIT* recidivists are recommitted at Framingham and are available for informal interviews with *WIT* screeners.

### *Study Limitations*

Two shortcomings of this study should be noted. First, and most importantly, the project lacks a comparison group. This was not "by design." I sought comparison group data from the Massachusetts Department of Correction. As of this writing, my formal request for data is pending. Due to the time limitations associated with this project, I decided it was best to move on with the data I had available to me.

A true experiment using offenders as the units of analysis runs a grave risk of being unethical. Random sampling is one the central tents of the classical experiment, but it would be inappropriate to withhold needed treatment from a control group of offenders to test the program effects on another group lucky enough to be placed in a program. Yet, with a carefully identified comparison group, hypothesis testing is possible. I intend to pursue an additional data request with another agency should the Massachusetts Department of Correction be

unable to accommodate my request. I see these data possibilities as “phase two” of this study, providing an additional piece essential to our empirical understanding of the *Women in Transition* program.

Another concern is the existence of a possible “halo effect” during the course of the focus groups. First identified by Edward Thorndike in 1920 in a study of how military officers rate the performance of their soldiers, this phenomenon suggests that individuals are inclined to perceive someone as having either all positive traits or all negative traits. It is possible that the staff and inmates, while in the presence of an authority figure (i.e. researcher), could have provided only the information they believed the researcher wanted to hear. Though it is not possible to determine the extent of any halo effect, I note it here in the spirit of full disclosure.

*Policy and Theoretical Implications - Should Prison Programs be Relational?*

It is one thing to say that some correctional sanctions may attend to the relational needs of women offenders and quite another to assert that all correctional programs should do it. Some scholars and policymakers believe that empathy and empowerment should be reserved for the victims of crime, not the perpetrators. Yet, correctional policy need not be a zero-sum game. A just sanction can balance society’s need to punish offenders with an attempt to rehabilitate them. We see examples of this with the creation of drug courts, mental health courts, and batterers’ programs. Federally, there has been a

readjustment of sentencing guidelines associated with crack cocaine offenses.<sup>48</sup>

Taken together, these developments point to a more even-handed approach to the criminal offender, which bodes well for female offenders, who tend to be less dangerous.

In this study, it appears that the female offenders benefited from their placement in the *WIT* program. The program helps ease the chronic overcrowding at MCI-Framingham, and puts women on a trajectory for a successful return to their communities. The inmates who participated in the focus groups told us that *WIT* restored their dignity, boosted their self-esteem, and empowered them. The program may have helped to heal some of the injuries wrought by years of trauma, abuse, and neglect. I believe there is evidence to show that the key to their success was the program's relational approach. The policy implications of this finding would be a reduced reliance on hard cells and the creation of more community-based beds for inmates. Less punitive and controlling sanctions invite a relational approach because the boundaries between treatment provider and custodial officer become blurred, with both groups working toward one goal – the effective reentry of the criminal offender to the community. Inside the walls of a secure prison, staff goals and expectations are often diametrically opposed to one other depending upon one's job title. One group sees the inmate as a criminal, the other might see her as a client. At *WIT*, both groups saw the inmates as people,

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<sup>48</sup> In a press release issued by the US Sentencing Commission on December 11, 2007, it was announced that the Commission would be amending Federal sentencing guidelines to reduce the penalties for crack cocaine offenses. Currently, the ratio to trigger a mandatory sentence for powdered cocaine and crack is 100:1, though the physiological effects of the substances are the same. See [www.sentencingproject.org](http://www.sentencingproject.org) and [www.usc.gov](http://www.usc.gov) for more information on this topic.

with a basic need for respect and connection. Under these circumstances, treatment was successful and public safety was enhanced.

### *Directions for Future Research*

Several questions are left unanswered by this study. First, does a program effect exist? Through the use of a comparison group, further hypothesis testing can explore this critical question more deeply. There are findings suggesting a program effect, but more convincing evidence is needed.

Secondly, I did not look into the area of cultural differences and their impact, if any, on recidivism. This is a path worth exploring for two reasons. Nationally, the female offender population is comprised mostly of women of color; but in this study about 80% of the population was white. Further, there is a substantial body of literature that shows racial disparities exist in the criminal justice response to Black female offenders resulting in harsher sanctions levied against them (McGee and Baker, 2003). It would be important to rule out race as an explanation of the program's favorable outcomes. Closer consideration of race/ethnicity and use of a comparison group, as previously stated, would clarify the role of race.

Third, the qualitative analysis portrayed correction officers who were unusually humane, yet able to carry out their security duties effectively and without role conflict. As a former correction officer myself, I am left to wonder what accounts for such a "rare breed." I suspect it goes beyond staff training and

may be related to organizational culture. This question would lend itself to an ethnographic study – a method that observes the everyday life of members of a community to understand the values, meanings, and functions of a social system. A closer inspection of the organizational culture of *WIT* might illuminate certain aspects of prison operations that would be useful to correctional managers more broadly.

Fourth, not only does the use of a comparison group strengthen the study from an empirical perspective, so does the use of a three-year follow up period to measure recidivism. Again, due to time constraints, I chose an 18-month follow up period. A more valid measure of reduced criminality involving a three year follow-up period should be considered. Arguably, the length of the follow up period determines whether an offender's criminality has been temporarily interrupted or extinguished entirely.

Lastly, this study could be expanded by using empirically validated instruments that measure how relationships foster psychological growth and well-being. The Jean Baker Miller Training Institute is actively developing assessment tools to guide and advance the work of relational model theorists.<sup>49</sup> This study could be the preliminary phase of a much larger project on the application of relational theory within correctional programming.

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<sup>49</sup> See <http://www.wcwonline.org/content/view/896/54/> for a description of the project associated with the development of relational model instruments.

*A Final Word*

I believe the *Women in Transition* program represents what is best in corrections today – progressive leadership, a cadre of caring staff, trauma-informed services, a clientele motivated to change, and positive post-release outcomes. The program sees the structural obstacles facing its participants and works hard to create opportunities for success through job placements and educational opportunities. The program understands the personal needs of its inmates, and believes that sound treatment and programming can begin to repair some of the damage wrought by years of abuse and neglect. The program staff knows, first and foremost, that *WIT* is in the business of public safety. However, it is astute enough to take the long view in its approach toward offenders: a sober, employed offender is less likely to reoffend than one who is merely incapacitated for a period of time. Finally, *WIT* appreciates the role of family in the lives of its participants, and encourages family connections as long as they promote the wellbeing of the client. From the personal to the political, the work gets done every day in this small, unassuming pre-release center, where women are truly in transition.

CASE FILE/CODE FORM

<p><b>PCF #:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Age:</b> _____</p>	<p><b>Length of Sentence:</b> _____</p>
<p><b>Time from Comm. to Arr.:</b> _____</p> <p>Commitment Date: _____</p> <p>Program Arrival Date: _____</p>	<p><b>Race:</b></p> <p>White _____ (0)</p> <p>Black _____ (1)</p> <p>Hispanic _____ (2)</p> <p>Other _____ (3)</p> <p>Unknown _____ (4)</p>
<p><b>Departure Date:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Type of Departure:</b></p> <p>Sentence Expiration _____ (0)</p> <p>Parole _____ (1)</p> <p>Disciplinary Termination _____ (2)</p> <p><b>Length of Time in Program:</b> _____</p>	<p><b># of Children:</b> _____</p> <p>Unknown _____ (0)</p> <p><b>Custody of Children:</b></p> <p>Lives with Mother and Father _____ (0)</p> <p>Lives with Mother _____ (1)</p> <p>Lives with Father _____ (2)</p> <p>Lives with relative(s) _____ (3)</p> <p>Lives with non-relative(s) _____ (4)</p> <p>In Foster Care _____ (5)</p> <p>Lives independently _____ (6)</p> <p>Unknown _____ (7)</p> <p>Not applicable _____ (8)</p>
<p><b>Education:</b></p> <p>No Diploma _____ (0)</p> <p>HS Grad/GED _____ (1)</p> <p>Some College _____ (2)</p> <p>College Graduate _____ (3)</p>	<p><b>Marital Status:</b></p> <p>Single _____ (0)</p> <p>Married _____ (1)</p> <p>Divorced _____ (2)</p> <p>Separated _____ (3)</p> <p>Widowed _____ (4)</p> <p>Unknown _____ (5)</p>

<p><b>Governing Offense:</b></p> <p>Person _____ (0)  Sex _____ (1)  Property ____ (2)  Drug _____ (3)  M. V. _____ (4)  Other _____ (5)</p>	<p><b>Employment Status:</b></p> <p>Yes _____ (0)  No _____ (1)  Unknown _____ (2)</p>
<p><b>Past History of Victimization:</b></p> <p>None reported _____ (0)  Yes _____ (1)  Unknown ____ (2)</p> <p><b>Type:</b></p> <p>Physical _____ (0)  Sexual _____ (1)  Psychological _____ (2)  More than one _____ (3)  None _____ (4)  Unknown _____ (5)</p>	<p><b>Reported Substance Use:</b></p> <p>Yes ____ (0)  No ____ (1)</p> <p><b>Type of Substance:</b></p> <p>Alcohol _____ (0)  Marijuana _____ (1)  Heroin _____ (2)  Cocaine _____ (3)  Crack _____ (4)  Polydrug _____ (5)  Other _____ (6)</p>

<p><b>Mental Health Status:</b></p> <p><b>Prior Diagnosis:</b></p> <p>No _____ (0) Yes _____ (1) Unknown _____ (2)</p> <p><b>Type:</b></p> <p>Depression _____ (0) Bi-polar _____ (1) Anxiety _____ (2) Other _____ (3) Unknown _____ (4)</p>	<p><b>Severity of Criminal History:</b></p> <p>No Record/Minor _____ (0) Moderate _____ (1) Serious _____ (2) Violent or Repetitive _____ (3) Serious Violent _____ (4)</p>
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**Notes**

**SEVERITY OF CRIMINAL HISTORY WORKSHEET**

PCF # \_\_\_\_\_

Case ID # \_\_\_\_\_

<b>ARRAIGNMENT DATE</b>	<b>CRIMINAL INCIDENT</b>	<b>SERIOUSNESS LEVEL</b>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		
15.		
16.		
17.		
18.		
19.		
20.		

**Circle One:**

**No Record/Minor (0)**

**Moderate (1)**

**Serious (2)**

**Violent or Repetitive (3)**

**Serious Violent (4)**

**RECIDIVISM WORKSHEET**

**Case ID #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Release from Custody** \_\_\_\_\_

**18-Month Follow Up Date**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Length of Time to Recidivism, if applicable**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Court Activity Table**

<b>Type (check one)</b>		<b>Date</b>	<b>Offense Type</b>	<b>Offense Code</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Conviction</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Revocation</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Commitment</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>None</b>			

**Recidivist (circle one)      No (0)      Yes (1)**

**FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**  
***Women in Transition Program Key Informants***

Program Staff

1. What are the goals of the *Women in Transition* Program?
2. What factors contributed to the establishment of the *Women in Transition* Program?
3. Do you believe the *Women in Transition* Program is effective? If so, why?

Women in Transition Program Participants

1. When the program staff recommended that you participate in the *Women in Transition* Program, why did you agree to do so?
2. Have you ever served a prison sentence in a pre-release center before? If so, how did it differ from the *Women in Transition* Program?
3. Have you ever served a sanction of incarceration without being housed in a pre-release center? If so, how did it differ from the *Women in Transition* Program?
4. What do you hope to gain from participating in the *Women in Transition* Program?
5. Do you think your relationship with your children will be different as a result of participating in the *Women in Transition* program?
6. Do you think your relationships with friends and family will be different as a result of participating in the *Women in Transition* Program?
7. Do you think that by participating in the *Women in Transition* Program you will be less likely to commit future crimes? If so, why?

**List of Variables, Attributes, and Codes**

<b>List of Variables</b>	<b>Attributes/Codes</b>
1. Age	Not applicable - numerical
2. Length of sentence in months	Not applicable - numerical
3. Time from commitment to arrival	Not applicable - numerical
4. Race	White – 0 Black – 1 Hispanic – 2 Other - 3
5. Type of Departure	Sentence expiration – 0 Parole – 1 Disciplinary termination – 2 Escape - 3
6. Length of time in program in days	Not applicable - numerical
7. Number of children	Not applicable - numerical
8. Custody of children at time of commitment	Lives with mother and father – 0 Lives with mother – 1 Lives with father – 2 Lives with relative(s) – 3 Lives with non-relatives – 4 In foster care – 5 Lives independently – 6 Mixed custody – 9 Adopted – 10 Deceased - 11
9. Education	No diploma – 0 High school graduate/GED – 1 Some college – 2 College graduate - 3
10. Marital status	Single – 0 Married – 1 Divorced – 2 Separated – 3 Widowed - 4
11. Governing offense	Person – 0 Sex – 1 Property – 2 Drug – 3 Motor vehicle – 4 Other - 5

12. Employed at time of commitment	Yes – 0 No - 1
13. Past history of personal victimization	None reported - 0 Yes – 1
14. Type of victimization	Physical – 0 Sexual – 1 Psychological – 2 More than one - 3
15. Reported substance use	Yes – 0 No - 1
16. Type of substance	Alcohol – 0 Marijuana – 1 Heroin – 2 Cocaine – 3 Crack – 4 Polydrug - 5
17. Mental health diagnosis prior to commitment	No – 0 Yes - 1
18. Diagnosis type	Depression – 0 Bi-polar – 1 Anxiety – 2 More than one - 3
19. Severity of criminal history	No record/minor – 0 Moderate – 1 Serious – 2 Violent or repetitive – 3 Serious violent - 4
20. Recidivist	No – 0 Yes - 1
21. Length of time to recidivism	Not applicable - numerical
22. Type of recidivism	Conviction – 0 Revocation – 1 Commitment - 2
23. Recidivism offense	Person – 0 Sex – 1 Property – 2 Drug – 3 Motor vehicle – 4 Other - 5

24. Recidivism offense level	Not applicable – 0 Level 1 – 1 Level 2 – 2 Level 3 – 3 Level 4 – 4 Level 5 – 5 Level 6 – 6
25. Year	1001 through 1999 – 2001 2001 through 2999 – 2002 3001 through 3999 – 2003 4001 through 4999 - 2004

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

**for a**

***FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION***  
***TOPIC: Re-entry and Relationships***

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

**TIME** \_\_\_\_\_

**LOCATION** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note:**

- **Participation is voluntary**
- **I will tape-record discussions**
- **Responses will be kept strictly confidential**
- **No names or other identifying information will be recorded**
- **You can refuse to answer questions at any time**
- **There is no penalty for refusing to participate**
- **There is no reward for choosing to participate**

**Northeastern University – Law, Policy, and Society Program**

**Principal Investigator:** Professor Joan Fitzgerald

**Title of Project:** The Social Control of Women – An Impact Evaluation of the *Women in Transition* Program

**REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

We would like to invite you to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to examine the impact that correctional sanctions have on female offenders, particularly those who are mothers.

**You must be at least 18 years old** to be in the research project. If you decide to take part in this study, I will ask you to be in a group and answer questions about the *Women in Transition* program. It will take about 60 minutes. We will meet inside the classroom at the center. No staff members will be present.

**The possible risks or discomforts of the study are minimal.** You may feel a little embarrassed or sad answering question about participating in the *Women in Transition* program. As you answer the questions I will tape record your answers. After I have carefully recorded your answers for the study, I will destroy my notes and the tapes.

**There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study.** However, your answers will help us learn more about re-entry programs like the *Women in Transition* program.

**Your part in the study will be handled in a confidential manner.** Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being part of this project. If, during the course of the focus group, I come to know your name, I will handle this information in a confidential manner so that no one will be able to identify you. Also, if you feel distressed after the focus group, please know that you can speak to *WIT*'s mental health staff or me privately and in a confidential manner. At no time will I violate your privacy if you appear distressed as a result of your participation in the group, but to safeguard your wellbeing, I may ask the Director of Treatment to check in with the group.

**The decision to participate in this research project is up to you.** You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any questions.

**If you have any question about this study,** please feel free to call me, Mary Ellen Mastrorilli, at 617-358-2465 or Joan Fitzgerald at Northeastern University. Her phone number is 617-373-3644. She is the person who is mainly responsible for the research.

**If you have any questions about your rights in this research,** you may contact Nan Regina, at the Division of Research Integrity, 413 Lake Hall, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115, telephone 617-373-7570. You may call anonymously if you wish.

You may keep this form for yourself.

Thank you.

*Mary Ellen Mastrorilli*

**Focus Group Dates, Type and Sample Size**

- First inmate focus group – September 5, 2006 n = 7
- Second inmate focus group – December 12, 2006 n = 6
- Third inmate focus group –February 15, 2007 n = 4
- Fourth inmate focus group – July 12, 2007 n = 6
- First staff focus group<sup>50</sup> – June 18, 2007 n = 4
- Second staff focus group – June 27, 2007 n = 2

**Schedule of Inmate Focus Groups and Dates of Participation**

Woman A through G – Focus Group #1 – September 5, 2006	n = 7
Woman H through M – Focus Group #2 – December 12, 2006	n = 6
Woman N through Q – Focus Group #3 – February 15, 2007	n = 4
Woman R through W – Focus Group #4 – July 12, 2007	<u>n = 6</u>
	n = 23

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<sup>50</sup> Due to a scheduling conflict one employee agreed to be interviewed earlier in the same day as the first staff focus group. I asked her the same set of questions and her responses were transcribed and analyzed along with the actual focus group data.

## Appendix 9

## Descriptive Analysis of Study Sample and Variable Codes

Variable	Code	Number	Percent
<b>Race</b>			
White	0	288	75.8
Black	1	31	8.1
Hispanic	2	57	15
Other	3	4	1.1
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Single	0	218	58.4
Married	1	33	8.8
Divorced	2	72	19.3
Separated	3	36	9.7
Widowed	4	14	3.8
Missing cases		7	1.8
<b>Education</b>			
No diploma	0	167	44.5
High school/GED	1	132	35.2
Some college	2	58	15.5
College graduate	3	18	4.8
Missing cases		5	1.3
<b>Reports Having Children</b>			
No	0	86	24.7
Yes	1	294	75.3
<b>Custody of Children</b>			
Lives w/mother and father	0	5	1.8
Lives w/mother	1	28	10.3
Lives w/father	2	39	14.4
Lives w/relative	3	54	19.9
Lives w/non-relative	4	3	1.2
In foster care	5	13	4.8
Lives independently	7	42	15.5
Mixed custody	9	76	28
Adopted	10	9	3.4
Deceased	11	2	.7
Missing cases		23	6.1
<b>Reporting Victimization</b>			
No	0	120	36.1
Yes	1	212	63.9
Missing cases		48	12.6
<b>Types of Victimization Reported</b>			
Physical	0	63	30.6
Sexual	1	30	14.6
Psychological	2	16	7.8
More than one	3	97	47.1
Missing cases		6	2.8
<b>Reporting Substance Use</b>			
No	1	5	1.3
Yes	0	372	98.7
Missing cases		3	.8

Variable	Code	Number	Percent
<b>Type of Substance Reported</b>			
Alcohol	0	50	13.5
Marijuana	1	8	2.2
Heroin	2	40	10.8
Cocaine	3	9	2.4
Crack	4	5	1.3
Polydrug	5	256	69
Other	6	3	.8
Missing cases		1	.3
<b>Reporting prior Mental Health</b>			
No	0	102	31.1
Yes	1	226	68.9
Missing cases		52	13.7
<b>Types of Diagnoses Reported</b>			
Depression	0	91	41.6
Bi-polar	1	27	12.3
Anxiety	2	15	6.8
More than one	3	86	39.3
Missing cases		7	3.1
<b>Severity of Criminal History</b>			
No record/minor record	0	83	21.8
Moderate	1	150	39.5
Serious	2	97	25.5
Violent/repetitive	3	50	13.2
Serious violent	4	0	0
<b>Governing Offense</b>			
Person	0	41	10.8
Property	1	97	25.5
Drug	2	140	36.8
Motor Vehicle	3	63	16.6
Other	4	39	10.3
<b>Type of Departure from the Program</b>			
Sentence expiration	0	148	38.9
Parole	1	119	31.3
Disciplinary termination	2	107	28.2
Escape	3	6	1.6
<b>Recidivist</b>			
No	0	232	61.1
Yes	1	148	38.9
<b>Recidivism Type</b>			
Conviction	0	49	33.2
Revocation	1	31	20.9
Commitment	2	68	45.9
<b>Recidivism Offense</b>			
Person	0	10	6.8
Sex	1	4	2.7
Property	2	32	21.6
Drug	3	40	27
Motor vehicle	4	17	11.5
Other	5	45	30.4
<b>Offense Seriousness Level</b>			
1	1	39	26.4
2	2	70	47.3
3	3	28	18.9
4	4	10	6.8
5	5	1	.7
6	6	0	0

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Age of Inmate</b>	33.14	17	67	8.552
<b>Number of Children</b>	1.89	0	8	1.580
<b>Length of Sentence (in months)</b>	9.88	1	36	8.552
<b>Days Awaiting Program Arrival</b>	61.91	0	769	87.206
<b>Days in the Program</b>	88.67	1	708	81.013
<b>Days to Recidivism</b>	219.97	1	530	151.905

**List of “Other” Offenses<sup>51</sup>**

- Motor Vehicle Offenses
- Operating Under the Influence
- Other Weapons Offenses
- Decency/Public Peace Crimes
- Contempt of Court
- Other Offenses
- Nonsupport
- Resisting Arrest
- Trespassing
- Violating of a Court Order
- Attempts to Commit A crime
- Prostitution
- Intimidating a Witness
- Escape
- Minor in Possession of Alcohol
- Obstructing Justice
- False Alarm
- Gaming
- Cruelty to Animals
- Environmental Offense
- Impersonating an Officer

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<sup>51</sup> According to the Massachusetts Department of Correction Report, *County Commitments 2006*, crimes in this category are miscellaneous offenses that are not clearly categorized into one of the other offense categories of Crimes Against the Person, Property, Sex, or Drug

## Appendix 11

*Bivariate Analysis of Dependent and Independent Variables*

	<b>Total</b> (N=380)	<b>Non-Recidivist</b> (N=232)	<b>Recidivist</b> (N=148)	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Pearson Chi Square</b>
<i>Independent Variables</i>					
<b>Race</b>				.818	.931
White	75.8% (n=280)	62.2% (n=179)	37.8% (n=109)		
Black	8.2% (n=31)	61% (n=19)	39% (n=12)		
Hispanic	15.0% (n=57)	56% (n=32)	44% (n= 25)		
Other	1.1% (n=4)	50% (n= 2)	50% (n= 2)		
<b>Custody of Children*</b>				.042	18.89
Lives with mom and dad	1.4% (n=5)	40% (n=2)	60% (n=3)		
Lives with mother	7.8% (n=28)	64.3% (n=18)	35.7% (n=10)		
Lives with father	10.9% (n=39)	61.5% (n= 24)	38.5% (n=15)		
Lives with relatives	15.1% (n=54)	46.3% (n= 25)	53.7% (n=29)		
Lives with non-relatives	.8% (n=3)	33.3% (n=1)	66.7% (n=2)		
In foster care	3.6% (n=13)	84.6% (n= 11)	15.4% (n= 2)		
Lives independently	11.8% (n=42)	71.4% (n= 30)	28.6% (n=12)		
Mixed Custody	21.3% (n=76)	63.2% (n=48)	36.8% (n=28)		
Adopted	2.5% (n=9)	22.2% (n=2)	77.8% (n= 7)		
Deceased	.6% (n=2)	50% (n=1)	50% (n=1)		
<b>Education</b>				.301	3.659
No diploma	44.5% (n=167)	56.3% (n= 94)	43.7% (n=73)		
HS grad/GED	35.2% (n=132)	62.9% (n=83)	37.1% (n=49)		
Some college	15.5% (n=58)	67.2% (n=39)	32.8% (n=19)		
College graduate	4.8% (n=18)	72.2% (n=13)	27.8% (n=5)		
<b>Marital Status</b>				.448	3.70
Single	58.4% (n=218)	56.9% (n=124)	43.1% (n=94)		
Married	8.8% (n=33)	69.7% (n=23)	30.3% (n=10)		
Divorced	19.3% (n=72)	65.3% (n=47)	34.7% (n=25)		
Separated	9.7% (n=36)	66.7% (n=24)	33.3% (n=12)		
Widowed	3.8% (n=14)	64.3% (n=9)	35.7% (n=5)		
<b>Governing Offense**</b>				.002	16.94
Person	10.8% (n= 41)	58.5% (n=24)	41.5% (n=17)		
Property	25.5% (n=97)	56.7% (n=55)	43.3% (n=42)		
Drug	36.8% (n=140)	59.3% (n=83)	40.7% (n=57)		
Motor Vehicle	16.6% (n=63)	82.5% (n=52)	17.5% (n=11)		
Other	10.3% (n=39)	46.2% (n=18)	53.8% (n=21)		

	<b>Total</b> (N=380)	<b>Non-Recidivist</b> (N=232)	<b>Recidivist</b> (N=148)	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Pearson Chi Square</b>
<b>Victimization History*</b>				.043	4.09
None reported	36.1% (n=120)	68.3% (n=82)	31.7% (n=38)		
Yes	63.9% (n=212)	57.1% (n=121)	42.9% (n=91)		
<b>Type of Victimization*</b>				.039	10.056
Physical	9.5% (n=63)	49.2% (n=31)	50.8% (n=32)		
Sexual	5.5% (n=30)	60% (n=18)	40% (n=12)		
Psychological	1.8% (n=16)	37.5% (n=6)	62.5% (n=10)		
More than one	18.4% (n=97)	61.9% (n=60)	38.1% (n=37)		
None	25.2% (n=120)	68.3% (n=82)	31.7% (n=38)		
<b>Substance Use</b>				.953	.003
Yes	98.7% (n=372)	61.3% (n=228)	38.7% (n=144)		
No	1.3% (n=5)	60% (n=3)	40% (n=2)		
<b>Type of Substance**</b>				.004	21.04
Alcohol	13.3% (n=50)	86% (n=43)	14% (n=7)		
Marijuana	2.1% (n=8)	62.5% (n=5)	37.5% (n=3)		
Heroin	10.6% (n=40)	50% (n=20)	50% (n=20)		
Cocaine	2.4% (n=9)	88.9% (n=8)	11.1% (n=1)		
Crack	1.3% (n=5)	40% (n=2)	60% (n=3)		
Polydrug	68.2% (n=257)	58% (n=149)	42% (n= 108)		
Other	.8% (n=3)	33.3% (n=1)	66.7% (n=2)		
<b>Mental Health Diagnosis*</b>				.014	6.10
No	31.1% (n=102)	70.6% (n=72)	29.4% (n=30)		
Yes	68.9% (n=226)	56.2% (n= 127)	43.8% (n=99)		
<b>Diagnosis Type**</b>				.002	16.51
Depression	28.3% (n=91)	46.2% (n=42)	53.8% (n=49)		
Bi-polar	8.4% (n=27)	77.8% (n=21)	22.2% (n=6)		
Anxiety	4.7% (n=15)	66.7% (n=10)	33.3% (n=5)		
More than one	26.8% (n=86)	55.8% (n=48)	44.2% (n=38)		
None	31.8% (n=102)	70.6% (n=72)	29.4% (n=30)		
<b>Severity of Criminal History**</b>				.002	9.850
None	21.8% (n=83)	76% (n=63)	24% (n=20)		
Some	78.2% (n=297)	57% (n=169)	43% (n=128)		
<b>Type of Departure From the Program*</b>				.011	6.397
Completers	70.4% (n=267)	65% (n=174)	34% (n=93)		
Non-completers	29.6% (n=112)	52% (n=58)	48% (n=54)		

	<b>Total</b> (N=380)	<b>Non-Recidivist</b> (N=232)	<b>Recidivist</b> (N=148)	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Age**</b>				.001	10.705
Mean	33.14	34.27	31.36		
St. Dev.	8.55	9.01	7.47		
<b>Sentence in Months</b>				.93	.007
Mean	9.88	9.85	9.91		
St. Dev.	6.52	6.77	6.12		
<b>Days in Program*</b>				.03	4.706
Mean	88.67	95.83	77.43		
St. Dev.	81.01	90.48	62.03		
<b>Number of Children</b>				.48	.498
Mean	1.89	1.85	1.97		
St. Dev.	1.58	1.55	1.63		
*p<.05					
**p<.01					

**Appendix 12 - Correlation Matrix**

	x1	x2	x3	x4	x5	x6	x7	x8	x9	x10	x11	x12	x13	x14	x15
<b>Age</b>	x1														
<b>Sentence in months</b>	x2	0.047*													
<b>Days from comm to arr</b>	x3	0.863	0.000**												
<b>Race</b>	x4	0.027*	0.001**	0.012*											
<b>Type of departure</b>	x5	0.206	0.000**	0.399	0.777										
<b>Days in program</b>	x6	0.000**	0.000**	0.038*	0.106	0.001**									
<b>Number of children</b>	x7	0.000**	0.012*	0.458	0.000**	0.328	0.757								
<b>Education</b>	x8	0.000**	0.906	0.972	0.000**	0.882	0.705	0.003**							
<b>Custody of children</b>	x9	0.783	0.622	0.922	0.255	0.144	0.798	0.096	0.213						
<b>Marital status</b>	x10	0.000**	0.621	0.465	0.017*	0.849	0.096	0.000**	0.023*	0.140					
<b>Offense</b>	x11	0.000	0.016*	0.007**	0.073	0.007**	0.280	0.885	0.059	0.658	0.001**				
<b>Victimization history</b>	x12	0.361	0.331	0.848	0.218	0.986	0.270	0.012*	0.065	0.440	0.599	0.433			
<b>Substance use</b>	x13	0.247	0.511	0.471	0.062	0.479	0.794	0.205	0.601	0.475	0.343	0.301	0.267		
<b>Mh diagnosis</b>	x14	0.047*	0.299	0.184	0.681	0.034*	0.510	0.000**	0.695	0.639	0.013*	0.087	0.000**	0.162	
<b>Criminal history</b>	x15	0.001**	0.000**	0.034*	0.764	0.000**	0.206	0.000**	0.403	0.648	0.268	0.018*	0.312	0.823	0.151

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Appendix 13*

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Project: Dissertation User: Administrator Date: 7/18/2007 - 12:48:57 PM  
 NODE CODING REPORT

Node: Goals

Created: 7/18/2007 - 12:17:13 PM

Modified: 7/18/2007 - 12:39:08 PM

Documents in Set: All Documents

Document 1 of 9 Staff FG June 18, 2007

Passage 1 of 5 Section 0, Para 10, 287 chars.

10: To rehabilitate by teaching the women coping skills, relapse planning (for when they get released). We set them up with resources in the community. Whether it might be going to a program or a sober house or getting them to treatment so that they don't recidivate and they don't return.

11:

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Passage 2 of 5 Section 0, Para 113, 101 chars.

113: To reintegrate criminal female offenders back into society- first and foremost to protect the public.

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Passage 3 of 5 Section 0, Para 117, 353 chars.

117: I think there are many goals. One of them being, getting them back into society, helping them get assigned back with their children(if they have been separated from their children), substance abuse issue, self improvement, helping them finance their money( so when they do get back out into the community and start working they can be self-sufficient)...

118:

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Passage 4 of 5 Section 0, Para 121, 147 chars.

121: I believe it is correcting negative behaviors as well as reducing recidivism

rates for the women that come into to the Women in Transition Program.

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Passage 5 of 5 Section 0, Para 129, 564 chars.

129: I would say providing them necessary tools-that are good-that they would need to get them back on the streets, working on their self esteem and confidence, getting them jobs or working on maintaining their jobs. If we get them a job here in the community and they decide to go back home, we can get them transferred so they won't have to seek unemployment. We get housing for them. We put them in a healthy and supportive environment which they are not used to prior to coming to jail. We help to get them back with their family and help them with their children.

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Document 2 of 9      Staff FG June 27, 2007  
Passage 1 of 2 Section 0, Para 13, 682 chars.

13: Our goal is to successfully reintegrate someone from the state prison in Framingham; bring them here in a minimum pre-release environment; re-establish bonds with their families, children, parents; build some sort of support network for them upon release; try and get work in the community; set up housing if need be and just to give the tools that they will need to successfully reintegrate back into the community. For them to be able to survive and still be here post-release. If they needed something they could come back to us and still be able to help them where we can ethically and without crossing any boundaries. Just being able to offer any services post-release as well...

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Passage 2 of 2 Section 0, Para 17, 1094 chars.

17: I agree with what Michelle said but also I think part of our job here is to be a positive role model and to help them build their self esteem back up. A lot of them have never had a human being speak to them in a kind way by saying "thank you, do you need help with anything, are you feeling okay today?" These are just the normal everyday questions you ask your friends or family. They find that very odd and I think it helps to build their self esteem. I think it in turn helps them...they go to work, they put on makeup, they do their hair, they study for their GED- without that little push or normalcy I don't think it would work. If they were still treated like how they were treated on the street...you know the male officers here play big role. The males in their life, most of the time, are

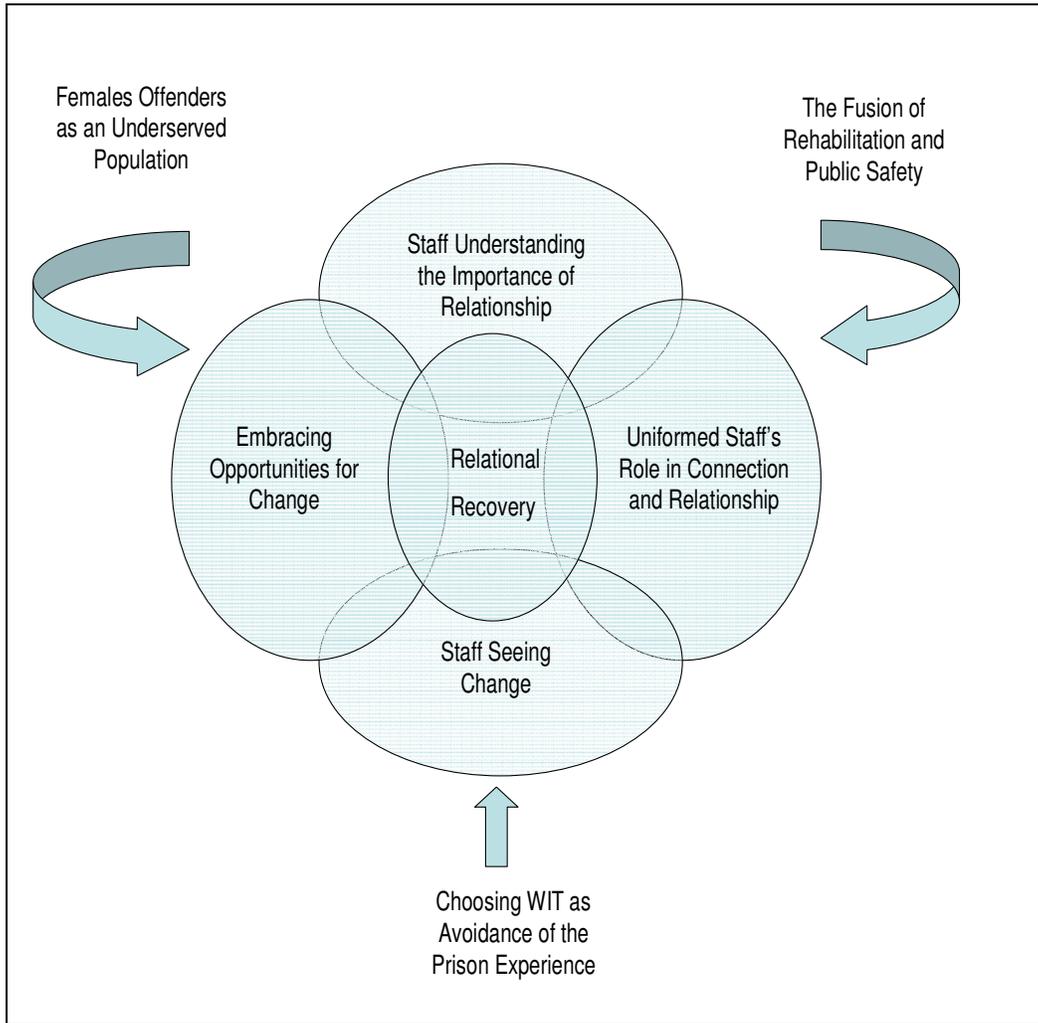
abusive or the ones they are running drugs for. So I believe the male officers here play a big role as far as showing them that they can have males in their lives who don't want anything from them, and that they can be treated very well. I think self esteem building is a huge part of it- I think!

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This Node codes no other documents in this set.

Model of Thematic Analysis



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