

The attached seminar paper, by Alacia Smith, entitled “Trauma Informed Care Success Rate of Female Offender Incarceration in the Wisconsin Prison System.” when completed, is to be submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science in Education degree, for which 3 credits shall be allowed, is hereby:

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Paper Advisor

Suggested content descriptor keywords:  
Trauma Informed Care  
Wisconsin Prison System  
Female offenders

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE SUCCESS RATE OF FEMALE OFFENDER  
INCARCERATED IN THE WISCONSIN PRISON SYSTEM

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A Seminar Paper

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

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In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Masters of Science

In

Education

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By

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Spring, 2016

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like give a special thanks to my mother Erma J. Buxton for encouraging me to pursue my Graduate's degree. My teenage daughter (A.A.S.) who inspires me on a daily basis to set higher goals and pursue higher heights. I am grateful to be in a position to recognize the benefits of working for the Department of Corrections, Division of Community Corrections Supervision of female offenders and networking the Benedict Center (community-based female only treatment provider). These opportunities have afforded this writer with a wealth of experiences, gaining greater understandings of trauma and recovery associated with offenders. I am grateful to have wonderful professors, Tom LoGuidice, PhD and Ann Krebs Bryne, providing in-depth structured instructions, availability, and one-on-one assistance and challenged this writer to become a critical thinker as my first year as a Graduate Student and Sue Sebastian working with this writer.

**ABSTRACT****Under the Supervision of Tom LoGuidice, PhD**

The present study examined the women who are incarcerated in the Wisconsin's Prison System. Who are the women being incarcerated? Do women have different need than men? What challenges and issue do they face? What are the characteristics of the female offender? What is the connection between violence, substance abuse and posttraumatic stress affects in the Criminal Justice System? Are there any predictors of antisocial behaviors? What effects does childhood trauma contribute to volatile behaviors? How has trauma informed care treatment reduced recidivism? Life after incarceration, is it possible or not? The implications of the findings are discussed in detail in this research paper.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The Wisconsin Prison System are incarcerating more women today than ever. Why are so many women involved in the criminal justice system? According to Justice-Involved Women, women represent a minute portion of the incarcerated population, yet it has increased greatly in the correctional population. The incarceration rate of women supersedes that of males in six of the eleven criminal categories including robbery, larceny theft, drug possession/use, aggravated assault, simple assault, drug dealing and use. "From 2000 to 2012, the number of adult women in jail increased approximately 139 percent compared to 118 percent for men" (Justice-Involved Women p. 32, January/February 2014). The majority of the Justice-Involved Women are currently on community supervision. Women represent one fourth of all offenders placed on probation.

Female offenders have endured high levels of abuse, victimization, suffer from mental health issues and engage in illegal drug use. Women are subjected to various issues and challenges that do are not related to male offenders. Women are being incarcerated at an alarming rate compared to their male counterparts. Are women no longer nurturers or have they become emotional extremist ready to ignite?

### **Statement of the Problem**

For incarcerated women in Wisconsin Prison System emotional health issues are the major contributor and if not addressed lead to asocial behavior and incarceration. To what extent is there a relationship between lack of trauma- informed care and incarceration? While women who are incarcerated that suffer from Trauma Informed Care issues develop a life of

incarceration, chaos and exploitation if their treatment needs are not met. Women who are financially disadvantaged, undereducated, chemically dependent represent the faces of incarceration? Why are traumatized incarcerated women's past experiences inhibiting their ability to identify unhealthy relationships?

### **Definition of Terms**

**Trauma;** a very difficult or unpleasant experience that causes someone to have mental or emotional problems usually for a long time,

**Informed;** based on information

**Care:** effort made to do something correctly, safely, or without causing damage,

(<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/care>)

Trauma from a psychological perspective describes experiences that are emotionally painful and distressing and that overwhelm an individual's capacity to cope. (Van der Kolk 2005).

### **Purpose of the Study**

To review of literature to better inform practice.

### **Significance of the Study**

Understanding the effects of Trauma Informed Care of incarcerated women. How Wisconsin's Prisons are addressing Trauma Informed Care? The effectiveness of the treatment and life after incarceration, utilizing the tools learned while incarcerated.

### **Delimitation of the Study**

The references used for the review of literature were collected over a period of 60 days using the resources of the Karmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and Wylie Library at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside. The several search engines provided by EBSCOHOST were used. The search terms were "Incarcerated Woman," "Trauma Informed Care," and "mental health and treatment options."

## **Chapter Two**

### **Wisconsin's First Female Prison**

Wisconsin Prison System is incarcerating more women today than ever according to the Wisconsin Department of Corrections ([WIDOCDataandResearchInquiries@wisconsin.gov](mailto:WIDOCDataandResearchInquiries@wisconsin.gov) ). In 1852 the Doty House located in Waupun, Wisconsin was the first female prison that housed two inmates. In 1921, the Wisconsin Industrial Home for Women opened serving those with morality base offenses. From 1931-1933, construction began opening the Wisconsin Prison for Woman located on the same grounds. By 1945, the Wisconsin Industrial Home for Women and The Wisconsin Prison for Women combined with a population of 145 inmates naming it the Wisconsin Home for Women. In 1975, the Wisconsin Legislature renamed the prison Taycheedah Correctional Institution. During the same year, Taycheedah allowed male inmates to be housed in a separate location, however reverted back to all female in 1978. The population increased from 180 inmates in 1990 to 687 by 1998. Currently there are approximately 1442 female offenders housed at Taycheedah Correctional Institution, Robert E. Ellsworth Correctional and Milwaukee Women's Correctional Center.

### **Girls, Women and Crime**

It's a boy! Many parents especially the fathers are elated to hear the new addition to the family is a boy. However, when it comes to females it an addition not so joyous. Many girls and women are overlooked in our society and are subjected to emotional, sexual and physical abuse. These horrific events have been ignored, minimized and trivialized. A vast majority of young girls who are victimized, who doesn't receive the appropriate trauma related treatment carry those issues onto her adult life. The increase in female juvenile delinquency is contributed to negative events

that have occurred in their lives. Young teenagers accounted for more than 30 percent of arrest in 2009 (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2010 a). The United States has altered their approach when it relates to female offenders. Majority of them are sent to juvenile detention centers or prison. During the past 30 years there has been a nine-fold increase in female incarcerations (Bureau of Justice Statistic 2001, 2010a, Maquire and Pastore, 1994 p 600).

Why are so many girls arrested? Law enforcement is not looking for the causes; they are implicitly avoiding addressing their issues. This has compromised their development, altered their survival skills and has lead them on a pathway of criminal behaviors. The girl's first contact with the criminal justice system is usually curfew violations, running away from home and truancy. Many of the girls who run away from home engages in "survival sex," to obtain money to purchase food, clothes and shelter and any other daily necessities. Childhood sexual assault and physical abuse leads to adult (women) related sex crimes, child neglect and illegal drug use resulting in imprisonment (Female Offender, p 30).

Girls are involved in gang activities, violence and fights taking on the male roles. 27.4 percent of females are involved in forcible rapes and 30.2 percent for robberies (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010, p 239). According to the data (Female Offenders, p18) there is a correlation between crime and delinquency. It noted the majority of the females affected are challenged economically, low academic attainment levels, under employed, single parent homes and are residing with multi family members in the same dwelling.

### **Characteristics of Female Offenders (race, age, homelessness, socio-economic)**

Who are the faces in America's Prison System? Sixty Percent of inmates are women of color. This has devastated their communities, families and children (Sentencing Project 2011). Since the War on Drugs, the number of incarcerated offenders have tripled, the likelihood of imprisonment are as follows:

- African American: Men 1 in 3, women, 1 in 18
- Hispanic: Men 1 in 6, women 1 in 45
- Whites: Men 1 in 17, women 1 in 111

It is evident that African Americans are disproportionately incarcerated compared to other races.

### **Women who are incarcerated nationally**

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Thomas Bonczar, Erinn Herberman, Ph.D. 2014), there are more than 4,751,400 adults were under community supervision. Female offenders are placed on community supervision for less violent crimes. The female offender population incarcerated nationally increased 18.1 percent from 2010 to 2014. Female incarceration rate increased 1.6 percent yearly from 2005 to 2014.

### **Women with trauma related events engage in antisocial behaviors (i.e. substance abuse, crime and violence)**

Based on the information obtained from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA's GAINS Center, 2015; SAMHSA et al., 2013), it notes that an increasing number of women are channeling in and out of the criminal

justice system suffering from mental health and substance abuse issues. It was noted the majority of the adult females (88%) were exposed to traumatic events and 74 percent of females reported sexual and physical abuse as children (Wolff, Shi, & Siegal, 2009). Incarcerated women who suffer from traumatic events have trauma related issues branded in their hearts and minds, which can result in the physiological changes in the brain which are linked to depression, aggression, anxiety, hostility, violence and substance abuse. It was noted “trauma is an almost universal experience among people who use public mental health, substance abuse and social services, as well as people who are justice-involved or homeless.” (pg.1) Women are more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse than their male counterparts. Trauma victims and survivors are less likely to receive treatment for trauma related symptoms.

How is the criminal justice system affected by women who engage in illegal behaviors? Most municipalities offer offender intervention, help for women who want to change. Some of those programs include parenting, cognitive intervention programming, anger management, survivors of sexual abuse, Beyond Battery and deferred prosecution. This was implemented for female offenders to address trauma and prevent trauma in the lives of their children.

There is the Sequential Intercept Model (SAMHSA, pg.2), which has five intercept points 1. Community/Law Enforcement, 2. Initial Detention/First Appearance Court, 3. Jail/Specialty Court/ Dispositional Court/ 4. Jail reentry/Prison Reentry and 5. Community Corrections-probation and/or parole (Extended Supervision in Wisconsin, very few parole cases). This model is the same model the Criminal Justice System utilizes in Wisconsin. Women are given the opportunity to alter their behaviors

however, the majority of them fail to alter their behaviors and spend a substantial amount of time in jail or prison. Many women who are incarcerated plead out their initial charge. Many are convicted of felonious offenses.

## **Wisconsin Department of Adult Institutions and Department of Corrections**

### **Treatment Programming that is effective**

There are 1442 women incarcerated in the Wisconsin Prison System. Many women do not have adequate access to mental health care, they are underinsured, uninsured or have minimal insurance coverage. Majority of women offenders suffering from trauma related issues and mental illness feel they are better off in prison. The female offenders will have access to medical and mental health services. Otherwise, many women who are not cared for become progressively threatening to the community, many of whom engage in assaultive behaviors. Many view this as criminalization of the mentally ill. Psychological services view mental illness as priority in prisons. Every offender receives an assessment and if they are identified as being mentally ill will receive the appropriate care. There are some offenders with undiagnosed mental health problems that are easily identified due to the close observation by correctional staff.

Listed below is data of services provided to female offenders who are incarcerated at Taycheedah Correctional Institution, Robert E. Ellsworth, and The Milwaukee Women's Center (Wisconsin Women's Correctional System 2014).

#### **Taycheedah Correctional Institution:**

Psychological Services Unit (PSU)

- Completed "Trauma in the Workplace" training for all institutional staff.

- TCI revamped the group programming services for segregation inmates to align the criminogenic needs.
- In July 2013, TCI hosted a continuing education event for PSU staff related to working with female sexual offenders.
- PSU staff continued involvement in a 2-year training in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) program implementation and in October 2013, the evidence-based program expanded by adding a second group.
- In April 2014, trauma treatment was expanded and the number of inmates participating in Trauma Recovery and Empowerment (TREM) doubled when a second group was added.
- Provided placement for 2 Doctoral level interns placed at TCI under the DOC's American Psychological Associate (APA) approved internship program. Psychiatric Services.
- Four CQI projects were completed.
- Two audits of the incorporation of psychiatric diagnoses onto the medical record's problem list were executed in 8/13 and 2/14.
- Two audits of the completion of psychotropic drug signed consents were executed during 8/13 and 2/14. Psychiatric Service components:
  - New Intakes Seen: 323
  - Emergent/urgent visits 79
  - Health Service requests 1220 for first 6 months (2014 HSR's are now melded with medical HSR's)
  - Total clinic visits 6673

**Robert E. Ellsworth Correctional Institution:**

TREATMENT PROGRAMS “A Look Inside” is a 90 day ATR program that uses a multi-faceted approach to help participants gain insight into one's own destructive behaviors and promote positive life skill void of criminal activity.

**Program Participation and Completions**

Anger Management-Number of participants 33, Number of Program Completions 23

Cognitive Intervention Programing- Number of participants 46, Number of Program Completions 33

Violence in Relationships- Number of participants 32, Number of Program Completions 32

Parenting: Number of participants 41, Number of Program Completions33

Earned Release Program (six month AODA) - Number of participants 140, Number of Program Completions 84

**Milwaukee Women’s Center:**

Earned Release Program (ERP) ERP has enrolled 42 inmates with 30 successful completions of the six-month program.

Family Connections: The Family Connections (FC) program is an evidenced based program provided through a collaborative effort between the Wisconsin Department of Corrections and ARO Behavioral Healthcare.

**COMPEL:**

- Road to Employment Success
- Mom as a Gateway Horizon Visiting Program Family Reunification Program (FRP)

helps children of incarcerated parents cope with feelings of sadness, anger, shame, alienation, confusion and overall dysfunction. Center for Self Sufficiency

- Healthy Relationship workshops “Within my Reach”
- Project 180 Mentoring Program

## **SUMMARY**

The history of incarcerated women has evolved over the years. As noted in the writings there are numerous contributing factors that lead to incarceration; social economics, age, race, domestic violence, trauma, sexual abuse, mental health illness and substance abuse. Will incarceration solve the problems facings many communities? Or is treatment an option as a preventative tool to reduce the recidivism rates of female offenders. The faces of majority of incarcerated women represent the minority populations. Someone’s grandmother, mother, sister, aunt, niece, cousin and daughter are incarcerated in a prison near you.

## **CHAPTER THREE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper provides a look in greater depth of women incarcerated in the Wisconsin Prison System. It reveals the different variables that cause women to be incarcerated-physical/sexual/emotional abuse, substance abuse, violence and socio-economic factors that contribute to criminal behaviors. Contrary to popular belief, majority of the prisoners incarcerated in the Wisconsin State Prison System are not there for violent crimes. Many prisoners are incarcerated for drug related crimes and mental health issues (Jonline.com James Causey).

Working for the State of Wisconsin, Department of Corrections as a probation/parole agent one would pose the question, “is there life after incarceration, how women are succeeding?” From this writer’s observation from working with female offenders, twenty percent of them released on supervision successfully complete supervision, implement the tools obtained from intensive out-patient trauma-informed care treatment, Seeking Safety and cognitive intervention programming. From my professional judgement, women who succeed in life are those who actually accept their past, understand how the abuse affected their decision making abilities, and sojourn from being a victim to an overcomer. The vast majority of female offenders who are not successful with salvaging the tools learned in the programs usually return to the United States criminal justice system with twelve to twenty-four months.

### **Recommendations**

The critical role for correctional professionals are to establish an alliance with the offenders, assess their criminogenic needs, develop a comprehensive case plan to

identify the drivers which cause them to engage in asocial/criminal behaviors, being cognizant of negative relationships, seek health relationships, restore positive relationships with family/friends, and address issues causing them to engage in criminal behaviors.

Female offenders must have supportive collateral sponsors and peers to develop a system of support. Recovery is a life -long process which takes commitment, self-actualization and motivation.

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