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Preparing for Release: Women's Perceptions on Reentry Workshops

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by

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### Abstract

In recent years, a growing number of prisons have begun to implement reentry programming for inmates preparing to be released. This study examines a reentry program recently implemented at a women's state prison, which offers workshops on mental health, budgeting, healthy living, and education. In this study, the perceptions of the three most popular workshops, mental health, healthy living, and relationships are of particular interest. This is the first evaluation of the reentry services offered at the facility. Oral surveys with 28 inmates were conducted in order to obtain perspectives on the program and the specific workshops in order to provide feedback to the staff and administration at the facility. This study also contributes to the growing body of literature on female reentry. Findings highlight both the benefits of the services and workshops and areas needing improvement.

## Preparing for Release: Women's Perceptions on Reentry Workshops

### **Introduction**

In the last decade, the number of prisoners incarcerated in the United States has risen dramatically (Barrick, Lattimore & Visher, 2014; McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014; White, 2012). In particular, the number of female prisoners has been increasing rapidly (Barrick, Lattimore & Visher, 2014; Covington & Bloom, 2006; Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013; McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014; Petersilia, 2005; White, 2012). As a result of this increase, large numbers of prisoners are being released back into society every year, with almost two-thirds of them returning within three years (Hallett, 2012). In order to reduce the likelihood that those offenders will commit future offenses, more facilities are implementing reentry programs and services to provide inmates with treatment and skills that will be beneficial to them upon their release. To assist with these activities, the Second Chance Act was passed in 2007 by the federal government to enable prisons to further develop reentry programs by authorizing additional funding for those facilities (Spjeldness & Goodkind, 2009). Subsequently, the number of reentry programs being offered across the country has increased. Effective reentry programs should help prisoners transition back into their communities with enough resources or abilities to become productive citizens in order to reduce recidivism rates. These programs should also be gender-sensitive, as it has been found that women have issues and needs that are different from men that need to be addressed (Cobbina, 2010; Covington & Bloom, 2006; Faris & Miller, 2010; Petersilia, 2005; Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009; White, 2012). While there have been numerous evaluations on reentry programs for male offenders, there are few studies evaluating programs specifically for women.

The goal of this study is to examine the perceptions of participants in the reentry services offered at the Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution at Muncy, a women's prison in central Pennsylvania. The reentry program began there in June of 2013, and it has not undergone any formal evaluations. The focus of the study is on inmates' perceptions of the current services, with specific attention paid to the three most popular workshops offered: mental health, healthy living, and relationships. This study provides information that can be used to help improve the services at the facility by highlighting the workshops' strengths and weaknesses. It may also be useful for other facilities looking to develop or to adjust their reentry services. Finally, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on reentry services and female offenders.

## **Literature Review**

### **Overview of Women in Prison**

In recent years, the number of female prisoners in the United States has grown considerably (Barrick, Lattimore & Visher, 2014; Covington & Bloom, 2006; Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013; McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014; Petersilia, 2005; White, 2012). While there are still more males incarcerated, the number of females incarcerated is increasing at a faster pace (Faris & Miller, 2010; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013; White, 2012), with a particularly large increase occurring in the past three decades (See Figure 1). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2014), in 2013 the number of female prisoners under state or federal jurisdiction was 111,287, up from 108,722 in 2012. The rate of imprisonment for females in those jurisdictions was 65 per 100,000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014). The recent increases in the female inmate population have been influenced in part by the stricter drug laws following the War on Drugs (Chesney-Lind & Morash, 2013; Kellett & Willging, 2011; McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014; Petersilia, 2005; Stanton-Tindall et al., 2011;

White, 2012). In addition to the large number of property offenses women are involved in, there has been an increase in violent offense convictions for women (Spjeldness & Goodkind, 2009).

Feminist criminology holds that there are differences between men and women engaging in crime, and these differences are important factors to consider. Many theories in criminology were developed by only examining males, but feminist criminology explores the possible reasons on why women engage in criminal behavior through unique and different paths (Chesney-Lind & Morash, 2013; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013). One focus of causality is on the common histories of abuse women in the criminal justice system have, while other areas of focus involve attributing factors to the patriarchal structure or other societal factors resulting in oppression (Chesney-Lind & Morash, 2013). These experiences may be influencing criminality in some women, and the potential differences are important to examine.

Research suggests that there are important differences between male and female offenders that need to be considered. Histories of physical and sexual abuse, as well as the role of children and substance abuse, are all frequently highlighted as common issues seen in female offenders (Barrick, Lattimore & Visher, 2014; Collica, 2010; Covington & Bloom, 2006; Kellet & Willging, 2011; Leverentz, 2011; McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014; Petersilia, 2005; Reisig, Holtfreter & Morash, 2006; Spjeldness & Goodkind, 2009; Stanton-Tindall et al., 2011). In addition, incarcerated women are “likely to be poor, African American, unmarried mothers, and to live in communities with large (former) offending and drug using populations” (Leverentz, 2011, p. 240). Like men, women in the criminal justice system deal with a lack of educational opportunities, employment options, and housing (Chesney-Lind & Morash, 2013; Collica, 2010; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2011; White, 2012). There is also the increased stigma given to offenders of both genders as a result of criminal offenses (Davis, Bahr & Ward, 2013). However, research

suggests that women are more likely to be struggling economically, in addition to having less education in their backgrounds (Barrick, Lattimore & Visher, 2014; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2011; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2014; Leverentz, 2010; Leverentz, 2011; McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014; Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009). While many of these issues may be seen in men, it is necessary to examine how they may be impacting women in different ways. These issues take on different forms and have different effects on the motivations of women engaging in crime (Barrick, Lattimore & Visher, 2014; Covington & Bloom, 2006; Reising, Holtfreter & Morash, 2006).

### **Mental and Physical Health**

Issues in mental and physical health are prominent among female offenders (Faris & Miller, 2010; Grella & Greenwell, 2007; Gunter, Chibnall, Antoniak, McCormick & Black, 2012; Petersilia, 2005; Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009) with over 60 percent of women in jails and in prisons reporting some chronic health condition (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015). Some studies suggest that women in prison have a higher prevalence of diseases than males (Petersilia, 2005). Psychological issues are also of particular concern among female inmates (Faris & Miller, 2010; Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009). Over 70 percent of women in state prison and over 60 percent of those in federal prison report mental health issues, which compares to the approximately 12 percent of female adults in the general population meeting the criteria for a mental health diagnosis (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). Given the prevalence of mental health issues among women in prison, some studies have examined how diagnoses may impact women's future behavior or how it may be connected to abuse histories (Gunter et al., 2012; Leverentz, 2011; McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014; Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009).



Histories of abuse, physical and sexual, are very common among women in prison (Covington & Bloom, 2006; Gunter et al., 2012; Leverentz, 2011; Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009; White, 2012), with approximately six out of ten state female prisoners reporting prior abuse (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999). Some studies note that women who have dealt with a trauma in life may be more likely than men to suffer negative effects, such as anxiety or depression, in the future (Gunter et al., 2012). Gunter et al. (2012) conducted a study comparing a history of traumatic life events, such as abuse, accidents, or witnessing distressing events, with a mental health diagnosis. The authors randomly selected 320 participants from the Iowa Corrections Department Classification Center and administered several psychological measures, in addition to the Life Events Checklist. The sample contained 264 men and 56 women. The results of the study showed that 64 percent of the sample had experienced at least one traumatic life event, but women were more likely to report such events and were also more likely to report various mental health disorders and the use of medication. Women in the sample also met the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder and eating disorders more so than men, and were more likely to report histories of various disorders before their incarceration.

The histories of victimization in women may also be a factor contributing to their future incarceration (DeHart, 2008). Studies have shown that females from abusive homes are more likely to engage in delinquent actions “such as sexual promiscuity, substance abuse, truancy, running away, and property crime” (DeHart, 2008, p. 1363). DeHart (2008) conducted qualitative interviews with 60 female inmates in a maximum-security facility. Questions covered topics such as victimization, relationships, and experiences with crime and the criminal justice system. It was found that physical abuse often left lasting scars and effects on the women and, occasionally, they would retaliate against their offenders. Some showed a more aggressive

personality, while others did more to keep their feelings internalized. Abuse was shown to hurt relationships with others and many had turned to substance abuse as a way of coping with their experiences. Women also had to deal with diseases and unplanned pregnancies as a result of the abuse. Reproductive health issues (Grella & Greenwell, 2007) are also a large concern for female inmates as they often are dealing with sexually transmitted diseases.

With the prevalence of mental health issues and instances of prior victimization in female offenders, it is important to consider the impact that this can have. Some studies indicate that sexual violence is more prominent against women, and that women in prison have often experienced trauma at higher rates than males (Gunter et al., 2012). There is also research that indicates issues, such as abuse histories, take different forms for women than men, and so the effect may differ (Reisig, Holtfreter & Morash, 2006). One statistic shows that “about 75% of women prisoners with mental health diagnoses also have substance abuse disorders” (Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009, p. 319), and so one possible impact is that women may resort to using substances as a method of coping (McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014). Mental and physical health issues are important to consider given the strain that they can produce on women and how they may choose to cope with this strain in potentially negative ways; however, these are not the only issues seen in women, and there are other factors that may have an impact of future criminal behavior.

### **Relationships**

The role of relationships is important to consider for women (McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014), as they can have a significant influence on their behavior (Covington & Bloom, 2006). The relationships that women have can be important for stability and support, with more positive bonds potentially decreasing the likelihood of committing a crime (Leverentz, 2011). However,

it can be hard for women to remove themselves from family or close relationships, even if they have a negative effect on them (Collica, 2010; Leverentz, 2011). Women may struggle with interacting with family or friends engaging in illegal activities, such as substance abuse, as this may influence their own decisions to engage in those activities as well (Leverentz, 2010).

Family and child relationships may have a significant impact on female prisoners (Barrick, Lattimore & Visher, 2014; Cobbina, 2010). Several studies examine the role relationships play in female offenders' lives and the impact social ties may have. Barrick, Lattimore, and Visher (2014) utilized data from the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative and used a sample of 255 women from six different states to examine how their social ties may have influenced recidivism. The authors measured the level of family support the inmates had, including the level of support post-release. They examined the frequency of contact the inmates received in the form of mail, visits, and calls while in prison, in addition to examining other factors, such as age, criminal history, employment, and education. What the authors found was that the offenders who were seen as medium or low risk were less likely to recidivate, as were those with greater family ties. The emotional support from families was not found to affect recidivism, but having better social ties overall resulted in more support following release and a reduced likelihood of recidivism.

Barrick, Lattimore, and Visher's (2014) work indicates that connections and support from close relations may be beneficial for future release. In another study, Cobbina (2010) utilized surveys and interview data from 50 women in Missouri in order to examine factors they felt assisted with their reintegration. There were 24 women in the sample who were not reincarcerated, and they cited having stronger positive support from family as an asset in the reintegration process. They also reported having more support from their parole officers and

more access to services and organizations. The 26 women who had returned to prison described lacking positive support from family and struggling with the stress of parole requirements. They also described less support from parole officers and difficulties in removing themselves from the negative environments.

Positive support networks and relationships appear to be beneficial for female inmates post-release. It is also possible that these types of relationships could help them as well while they are still incarcerated. Collica (2010) interviewed 49 inmates and former peer educators to see if the HIV peer programs that they had participated in helped assist in forming social bonds and helped to improve their adjustment. The majority of participants regarded the programs as an extended family, and the community was cited as being highly positive. Collica (2010) also found that participants in the program had fewer disciplinary issues, and those who had been released had found more support than as well.

Family and friends can produce beneficial or detrimental results, depending on the support level and type of influence. Another important relationship to consider with incarcerated women is the relationship with their children. A large number of incarcerated women have children, often minors (Covington & Bloom, 2006; Doge & Pogrebin, 2001; Michalsen, 2011; Petersilia, 2005). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2000), over half of female prisoners have children. Women feel very bonded to their children, and even those in prison want very much to be there to support and provide for their children (Cobbina, 2010; Faris & Miller, 2010). Separation from the children can be harmful to both the mother and the child (Bruns, 2006; Collica, 2010; Loper & Tuerk, 2011). Sometimes the children are able to live with relatives, but others are placed in the foster care system or were already placed there prior to the mother's incarceration (Bruns, 2006; Michalsen, 2011; Petersilia, 2005). Female offenders often

want to keep their children (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001), but they also often need help when dealing with the issues that arise from child services (Grella & Greenwell, 2007). The difficulty with family relationships can put additional strain on women released from prison.

Dodge and Pogrebin (2001) highlight the emotional issues that result from the separation of mother and child among female inmates. Some of the emotional issues that result include anxiety and depression. Dodge and Pogrebin conducted qualitative interviews with women in order to discuss and examine some of the hardships that can be encountered during parole. The women interviewed were concerned for their children, but they were also hurt by the feelings that they were a failure at being a parent. They acknowledged that foster care makes it harder to get their children back upon their release, and it may even keep them separated. It is also noted in the study that there are considerable conditions that have to be met in order to show that the mothers are fit to have custody. This further adds to the stress incarcerated mothers experience.

Michalsen (2011) conducted an exploratory study to examine desistance from crime. Around 100 women who were mothers to at least one child were interviewed. While a majority of the women wanted to, most had not yet reunited with their children. The women did not often report children as a source of desistance, but they did note that children could be a positive influence or a source of negative stress. Most participants did respond positively when they talked about their children. This is similar to a number of additional studies which suggest that women in prison value the relationships with children and with others (Barrick, Lattimore & Visher, 2014; Cobbina, 2010; Faris & Miller, 2010; McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014), but these relationships could be positive or negative and so their impacts may differ (Barrick, Lattimore & Visher, 2014; Collica, 2010; Davis, Bahr & Ward, 2013; Leverentz, 2011; Michalsen, 2011). Negative relationships in particular are important to consider, as they could be a driving factor in

a woman's criminal behavior. Relationships with family and with children can impact women depending on if there is a great deal stress resulting from them, or if they are a source of support. Whether or not the relationships are a positive support could influence success upon release from prison, and so it is important to consider the effects of relationships, in addition to other factors common in the histories of female offenders, when developing programming.

### **Gender-Specific Programming**

As a result of these prevalent issues, it has been suggested that prisons should take a more gender-sensitive approach when developing programs (Cobbina, 2010; Covington & Bloom, 2006; Faris & Miller, 2010; Petersilia, 2005; Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009; White, 2012). These programs would include reentry services that need to pay particular attention to various issues with which women struggle. Covington and Bloom (2006) outline several guiding principles that they recommend should be used when developing gender-responsive programming. These programs must take into consideration that there are differences between men and women, and that these differences impact how they go through the criminal justice system. They should also pay particular attention to the issues that women face and offer ways to assist with improving them. There should be treatment options for mental health disorders and substance abuse, and assistance for dealing with past traumas, as all of these have a significant impact on women in the criminal justice system. Relationships with family and friends must also be addressed given their influence and importance to women. It is important that these types of programs occur in environments that are supportive and safe as they are more likely to lead to greater improvements (Covington & Bloom, 2006). Gender-responsive programming has the potential to be very beneficial for women in prison, and so it should be utilized when developing services and programs for them.

## **Reentry Services**

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2014), over 620,000 inmates were released from state and federal prisons in 2013. A large number of those released from prison are estimated to be reincarcerated at some point, with a significant number returning within the three years following their release (Barrick, Lattimore & Visser, 2014; Berg & Huebner, 2011; Hallett, 2012; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2014; Wikoff, Linhorst & Morani, 2012). Many inmates who are released from prison find themselves in the same environment that they were in when they committed the initial offense (Hallett, 2012), and it is possible that returning to those environments can influence whether former inmates succeed upon release. The increase in the number of female inmates, and the subsequent increase in inmates being released from prison, suggests that we must look at the reentry programs and treatment options available to them in order to help the transition back into society.

Reentry programs are services offered within correctional facilities that are meant to help inmates transition out of prison by providing skills and advice that will be useful upon release. There is variation in the design of the programs (Severson et al., 2012), but they often offer services related to substance abuse, mental health, and parenting, which are intended to help inmates reintegrate back into society with the hope that they will have skills and treatment that will reduce the likelihood of recidivism (Hallett, 2012; Wikoff, Linhorst & Morani, 2012). While both male and female offenders may benefit from programs, it is important to note that women have needs that are different from men and programs should be tailored accordingly to account for the common issues in areas such as health and relationships (Faris & Miller, 2010; Petersilia, 2005; Reisig, Holtfreter & Morash, 2006). According to feminist theory, women often have different approaches to crime and so programs should be designed to fit them (Covington &

Bloom, 2006; Chesney-Lind & Morash, 2013; White, 2012). However, few programs have been found to match women's needs effectively (Covington & Bloom, 2006).

White (2012) conducted a study examining gender-responsive programs and their effectiveness. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to assess a number of different programs in different locations. It was found that the women who were able to participate in gender-responsive services did better after they were released. The need for gender-responsive programs and gender-responsive training and resources were cited as being highly important, as was the attention to family and to issues with substance abuse. Given the numerous issues that are commonly seen in female offenders, such as mental health, relationship struggles, and victimization history, it is not surprising that programs that address these specific needs may produce better results upon release.

At this time, few evaluations have been conducted on reentry programs that are specifically for women. McDonald and Arlinghaus's (2014) work is an example of a study that examines a reentry program for females in Northern Kentucky. The Northern Kentucky Female Reentry Project began in 2009, and it utilizes intensive case management that enables more interaction with clients and staff, along with increased access to treatment and services for a longer timespan. The program also has a risk/needs assessment meant to help establish a plan for inmates that will follow them through release. Results of the study found that participants in the program had lower recidivism rates than non-participants. Almost three-fourths of participants did not commit a new offense and just over half did not violate parole. In addition, those who participated in the program before and after release had a higher likelihood of obtaining employment following release. Employment and higher education levels were believed to contribute to lower recidivism rates.



An additional evaluation conducted by Holtfreter and Wattanaporn (2014) examines the Transition from Prison to the Community Initiative (TPCI), a program that has been used in a number of states to develop programs with the intention of reducing recidivism. The initiative examines all activity in the system from the initial assessment to after release. The initial classification of both male and female offenders is used to determine the appropriate treatment or programming to be used. The study examines a state with TPCI (Michigan) and a state without the program (Arkansas). Specifically, Holtfreter and Wattanaporn (2014) focus on how gender issues can be examined and how to incorporate these issues into specific programs. Michigan's Prisoner ReEntry Initiative incorporates specific phases modeled after TPCI, along with the inclusion of gender-responsive programs and risk-needs assessments. The program has been largely successful, with a reduction in recidivism rates overall, a reduction in technical violations on supervision, and an increase in the time until reoffending. Arkansas, by comparison, does not incorporate TPCI-based policies and instead utilizes the Ohio Risk Assessment System, which focuses primarily on high-risk offenders and is not gender-responsive. Arkansas does not appear to be as successful as Michigan in reducing recidivism rates with almost three-quarters returning on new charges.

The limited number of studies regarding reentry services for women appears to show positive outcomes. For the Northern Kentucky Female Reentry Project, 74 percent did not obtain a new offense and 58 percent did not have a parole violation (McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014). The states utilizing a TPCI model also reported lower recidivism rates along with a 38 percent drop in the number incarcerated for parole violations in Michigan (Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2014). While more evaluations are needed, it appears that some forms of services are more beneficial than no services. Recidivism has not been completely eliminated, but it does appear to

be lowered for participants in well-developed programs. The study conducted by White (2012) also lends support to the notion that gender-responsive programs may produce better outcomes for females facing release.

The present study contributes to the growing body of literature on female reentry. The reentry services of focus incorporate workshops covering a number of issues frequently seen in female offenders including mental health, employment, relationships, and parenting. This study utilizes qualitative methods, which are beneficial for gaining detailed first-hand experiences and identifying different themes appearing in responses. This method was chosen in order to highlight participants' perceptions on reentry services and specific workshops. Oral surveys were conducted in order to examine how participants in a relatively new reentry program felt about some of the workshops. Analysis of the surveys resulted in several common and important themes in addition to recommendations for improvement.

## **Current Research**

### **Overview of the Reentry Services at SCI Muncy**

The State Correctional Institution at Muncy (SCI Muncy) is located approximately 15 miles from the city of Williamsport in central Pennsylvania. It is one of two all-female institutions in the state, and it serves as the diagnostic center for female prisoners in Pennsylvania. A medium/maximum security prison, it currently houses just over 1,400 inmates. SCI Muncy began offering its current reentry services in June of 2013. Inmates who are eligible for release with dates as far as a year in advance can take advantage of the services being offered. They are required to attend an orientation and two mandatory sessions on parole and victim awareness. Orientation and other sessions occur in a separate unit for the reentry services.

If inmates are housed in the restricted housing unit or in one of the mental health units, staff will give an orientation session at that location in order to allow for more participants.

The orientation lasts for two days and provides information to participants about all of the workshops being offered. In addition, there is a session on obtaining proper identification and all participants receive a “survival manual” that provides basic information to help them develop a plan for reentry. Aside from the three mandatory workshops, inmates can select as many or as few workshops in which they would like to participate. Some of the voluntary workshops offered include mental health, budgeting, healthy living, and education (See Appendix A for a list of current workshops and selection checklist). Some workshops not included in the core group are offered on occasion if there is an interest, such as the philosophy of moral reasoning workshop recently taught by a university professor. All of these are designed to help the prisoners prepare for life outside of prison. Inmates may be placed on a waiting list for workshops if there is not enough room or current sessions are running. The waiting times vary depending on how popular the workshops are, but inmates are typically able to join within several weeks when new sessions begin. The workshops may be run by staff members in the reentry services, other inmates who are certified or selected to lead the workshops, or volunteers from outside of the facility. At the time of surveys, approximately 1,400 inmates have participated in the orientation.

The three most popular workshops are mental health, healthy living, and relationships. These three workshops were of particular interest for the current study given their popularity and their relevance to some of the more prominent issues female offenders face. The mental health workshop typically meets for one all-day session or two half-day sessions, and it draws upon cognitive behavioral therapy to help teach various coping mechanisms and methods to change thought processes. It provides general information on mental health issues and medication, in

addition to some therapeutic advice. The relationship and healthy living workshops meet once a week for several weeks. The relationship workshop covers in-depth aspects of relationships, including the relationship with the self and the possible meanings of love. It also works to help participants identify problem areas in relationships, and offers advice on how to best handle those issues. The healthy living workshop discusses diet, exercise, grief, and stress management. It incorporates activities and challenges, including a 30-day fitness challenge and information on healthy eating habits and options. At the time of this study, over 150 inmates have participated in the relationship and healthy living workshop, and over 100 have participated in the mental health workshop. This study examined the perceptions that participants had of these three workshops to determine if they were helping with the common issues female offenders face.

### **Methodology**

Permission was given by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections to pursue this study. Following this approval, additional information was obtained on the workshops and services in the forms of handouts and manuals, which were reviewed in detail. Several reentry sessions were also observed. In order to recruit participants for this study, a flyer describing the study was given to inmates who had participated in at least one of the three workshops of interest, and they were then asked to volunteer for the study. Some participants were selected by staff based upon their participation in the workshops<sup>1</sup>. Other inmates were asked to volunteer for the study upon arrival at the reentry facility. No compensation was provided, and all participation was voluntary. Asking inmates to volunteer for the study was not the most ideal given the likelihood that those volunteering may have more positive perceptions about the program.

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<sup>1</sup> The selection by staff members does lead to the potential of biased results, as they may prefer selecting those who view the services more positively or respond with more enthusiasm.

However, it was most convenient in order to ensure participants would be more willing to freely discuss the services.

The oral surveys in this study were conducted in the reentry services building in a quiet and private area, and all but two were conducted individually. A total of 28 inmates participated in the study with 17 having participated in the mental health workshop, 21 in healthy living, and 21 in relationships. Three of the participants in the relationship workshop were in the process of completing it at the time of surveys, as was one in the healthy living workshops. One participant also reported participating in a condensed version of the healthy living workshop. Out of the 28 participants, 11 participated in all three workshops of interest, 9 participated in two of the three, and 8 participated in one.

Oral surveys were conducted in order to obtain detailed information on how participants felt about the programming. The surveys were semi-structured and included workshop-specific questions for the three of interest, as well as questions regarding the reentry services in general and the orientation process. Questions on the general reentry services included the motivations participants had for selecting their workshops, how often the workshops met and how comfortable they felt with the workshop leaders. They were also asked about the orientation and mandatory sessions to see what, if anything, could be improved. Questions regarding the mental health, healthy living, and relationship workshops included what goals participants had and whether or not they had achieved them. In addition, questions regarding what specific things participants learned or discovered and whether they felt that it had benefitted them were included for the workshops, as were questions to determine what could be improved upon and what is working (See Appendix B for a complete list of questions). Surveys lasted, on average, between 20 and 30 minutes.

## **Perceptions on the Reentry Workshops**

### **Overall Perceptions of the Workshops**

Most responses about the reentry services were positive. Inmates often responded with enthusiasm about the services in general, although they also often reported the need for some improvements. A majority of the inmates surveyed had participated in more than one workshop offered at the facility, with two having participated in all of those that were offered. A majority also responded that there were other workshops that they wanted to take and had signed up for; however, some also responded that they would have liked to participate in more, but were unable to do so due to time or work restraints. Some were preparing for release in the near future and so would not be able to participate in any further workshops.

When asked about why they chose to participate in the workshops that they did, inmates gave a variety of responses. The most common reason was because they wanted to better themselves or obtain more knowledge prior to release. Some had specific reasons for selecting certain workshops. A number of respondents who participated in the relationships workshop discussed how they selected it due to their struggles in relationships. Many women responded that they wanted to do what they could to prepare for release and they saw the services as a way to help with this. One woman responded that she had “things I needed to do to get on track...to be a better version of myself.” When selecting workshops, most women did not have a problem with the process of selecting them, but would have preferred if the workshops were offered more frequently. Some responded that they were trying to take more workshops, or that there were additional ones that they would like to take, but given the waiting lists or their own time restrictions they are unable to do so. At the same time, many of those who responded this way also understood the lack of resources and staff at the facility.

In regards to the orientation and mandatory sessions, the overwhelming majority responded that they appreciated the living under supervision session about living on parole. Many participants were glad that they could hear about parole from an actual state parole agent. They also enjoyed being able to ask specific questions and gain more information on what they can expect since some have never been on parole before. However, there was a concern as to whether the session was realistically portraying what it is like being on state parole. In addition to the parole session, a number of participants reported that the session during orientation on obtaining proper identification was very beneficial. When asked about improvements and the quality of the workshop leaders, all of the participants felt comfortable with those leading the workshops. Many reported that they were very helpful and knowledgeable and would answer any questions that they had. For some, the current length of the workshops that they had taken was acceptable, and they did not feel that there needed to be any more time or sessions. For others, they would like the workshops to be longer as they feel that there is not enough time to cover everything. This view was apparent for workshops that cover topics involving more complex issues, such as mental health. Some women explained that they enjoy being able to meet with their group and like what they are doing and would like to continue meeting. The mental health workshop, which is usually just a one or two day workshop, was mentioned often as needing to be longer. Some women would like to see follow-up sessions or have the group meet following the conclusion of the workshop in order to continue to talk and to work, and it was mentioned that this had been done on one occasion. Again, however, many of the inmates did understand the logistics of increasing the number and length of the workshops and they recognize that it is difficult with the current resources.

### **Perceptions of the Mental Health Workshop**

Responses to the mental health workshop were mixed, with some women reporting that they enjoyed it and others reporting that they thought it could have been better. When asked what goals they had for the workshop, many stated that they wanted to obtain more knowledge on mental health. A number of participants reported having mental health diagnoses of their own, and so they wanted to work on that. Information on medications, or alternatives to it, was also sought frequently by participants, as were coping skills. There were some who did not mention having a mental health diagnosis, but they were still hoping to obtain more information for their own benefit, for example, if they had a family member who was struggling with mental illness. Mixed responses came when participants were asked if they had met their goals or had improved their mental health. Some responded that they had met their goals of obtaining more information, while others felt that the workshop fell short and did not improve their mental health. Many women would prefer it if the workshop had discussed a greater range of topics, such as eating disorders.

There were some aspects of the workshop that many of the participants found helpful. Breathing exercises and the information pamphlets were referenced as being good tools to utilize, and a number of women reported using the breathing exercises or meditation techniques frequently. Women also enjoyed the support that the workshop provided, and they discussed how it was good to see that they are not alone in dealing with these issues. Several activities were also mentioned by some as being helpful. One activity described involved groups of participants being assigned a mental health diagnosis and then having to determine what the symptoms of that diagnosis would be. There were several participants who did not report changes in the



mental health issues that they wanted to address nor did they find general improvements in their mental health.

In addition to activities incorporated within the workshop, many women reported engaging in activities outside of the workshop. Exercise and walking, in addition to reading or journaling, were discussed occasionally. Some women engaged in these activities as a result of workshop recommendations, but others had already been engaging in them prior to the workshop. Many participants also would like to continue with some form of therapy or treatment following release. For some, they knew specifically what therapies they would like to pursue, such as outpatient or community groups. Others were more open to whatever is out there and available to them, although they were not always aware of available resources.

### **Perceptions of the Healthy Living Workshop**

Responses to the healthy living workshop were more positive overall than those for the mental health workshop. The workshop itself lasts longer than the mental health workshop with one session per week for several weeks. In addition, the workshop covers several topics relating to health and well-being, including stress, grief, and healthy eating and exercise habits. As a result of the range of topics covered, inmates had a variety of responses of what they appreciated the most or found the most beneficial. Several participants found the sections dealing with grief and stress very helpful. Some did not expect these topics to be covered by the workshop, but they were glad that they were and felt they were beneficial. The workshop helped some cope with their grief if they had a loved one pass away, or it helped them grieve for other things that they may not have realized were affecting them, such as the time lost outside from being incarcerated. Similarly, some participants reported not realizing how much stress they were under and how

that has affected them physically and emotionally. The workshop also reportedly covered topics to help them cope with this.

While some participants mentioned joining the workshop to improve their overall well-being, others took it simply as a way to learn healthier habits. The workshop has a 30-day challenge for exercise and wellness that inmates can work to achieve if they wish. Many responded positively about the challenge. There were also positive responses regarding the healthy eating tips. A good portion of the women discussed how it was hard to eat well while incarcerated as they were not given a lot of healthy options. Some still felt that the workshop helped them plan and understand their eating habits better, and they felt that they eat well even with their limited options. Others wanted to take the skills that they learned from the workshop with them when they left and would have access to better foods.

Participants for this workshop mentioned several goals that they had. Eating habits and fitness were mentioned often, but some also wanted to work on stress and coping habits. Many confirmed that the workshop did help with at least some of the goals that they had in mind. A number of the women also reported a greater awareness of habits or issues with which they were struggling. For some, they knew what it was that they had to work on, but they were simply choosing not to. This response came with eating habits, as several participants noted that they enjoyed unhealthy foods, and they did not have the desire or motivation to change this aspect of their lifestyle. The majority of respondents did appear to have obtained skills or information that they could utilize in the future and while they were still incarcerated. Even though the majority felt that the workshop was good, there were still some recommendations given, namely having more outlets or options available in the facility and having more gender-responsive options, such as methods of coping with eating disorders that are commonly seen in women.

### **Perceptions on the Relationship Workshop**

The responses for the relationship workshop were overall very positive, with many of the participants reporting similar goals and information. The overwhelming majority of participants struggled with bad or unhealthy relationships, and that was their primary motivation for taking the workshop. These bad relationships could come from family, partners, or even with themselves. Participants would sometimes discuss how they were not good people to be in relationships with and they knew that they needed to work on that. A majority recognized the importance of having a good relationship with themselves before they could be in relationships with others. One woman described her goal of working to “be a better me so that I don’t come back” when asked about her objectives for the workshop. Another woman remarked how she was unsure if she had met her goals, but she did learn that “part of being in a healthy relationship is you have to put yourself first and I wasn’t doing that.”

Many women surveyed responded that they had achieved some of their goals. Others reported that they had not achieved their goals, but they had still been able to learn valuable information about their relationships. One common lesson mentioned was the importance of setting boundaries. Some talked about how they had struggled with saying “no” in the past and they would let others walk all over them, but they now have a better understanding of what healthy relationships look like and they want to try to be better with setting boundaries. The importance of having foundations in relationships was also mentioned as something that was necessary for healthy relationships. Women would talk about the need of having a good relationship with themselves in order to have good relationships with others, as it is the foundation piece for healthier relationships.

A number of women did talk about previous struggles that they have had in unhealthy relationships, including the different forms of abuse that they faced. Several discussed how they came from dysfunctional families or were abused as a child, while others recounted how they faced abuse from their partners. Some may have been abused in childhood, and this was noted to have an impact on future relationships and behavior, in addition to how they defined love. In spite of the difficult histories some women reported having, they also talked about how the workshop helped teach them warning signs of bad relationships. They know what “red flags” to look for when in relationships and how to get out. Several respondents also discussed how the workshop helped with their communication skills, and they have been using those skills to work on rebuilding or fixing their relationships. Some women have noted that they have been able to work on their relationships with their families or children since taking the workshop, and they have since made an effort to reach out and begin to repair these relationships.

When asked about whether or not they still needed work in their relationships, some participants responded that they will always need work. They understand that relationships are difficult and there will always be things that could be improved upon. Even with the need for constant improvement, many of the inmates still thought that the workshop had helped them with their relationships. There were some women who did not feel that their relationships had been helped, but most had gained at least some knowledge from the workshop. Most also felt that the workshop was run well and did not need many improvements. Some improvements mentioned were needing to discuss domestic violence in more detail and providing more resources for women when they are released. While a few of the women were aware of some resources, it was mentioned how they are all released to different areas and so the resources available will be different.

## **Emerging Themes**

Several themes emerged from the responses given for these workshops. One was that most women valued the information that they gained from the workshops. Even though not everyone felt that the workshops fulfilled all of the goals that they had hoped it would, most still felt that some information was given, and that it would be beneficial to them in the future. For example, despite the limited options and resources at the facility, many women who had taken the healthy living workshop noted that they were using the advice they were given in order to try and eat better or exercise more. The relationship workshop also helped some deal with their current relationships, even though they were still incarcerated, by providing information on many forms of relationships.

While the workshops provided women with helpful information, it is important to recognize that this information will not solve all of the issues participants are dealing with. For instance, the mental health workshop provided a very basic overview on mental health issues and treatment options. Some did find this information useful, but it is not something that will have a significant impact on the mental health of participants. This one-day workshop did not provide any detailed counseling or treatment, and so it will not fully address the mental health issues that many of these women are facing simply by providing more information. In addition, some participants in the relationship workshop noted how they had more information and advice on dealing with relationships, but they would always need to continue working on them. Having these workshops does appear to provide some information that can be used by the women who participate in them, but they do fall short on several levels by only providing basic overviews on some topics that could use a far greater amount of detail and focus.

Even though the information obtained from the workshops may only help with some issues that participants are facing, there is another benefit to the workshops that many participants appreciated. The workshops provided many women with a way to cope with and deal with the stresses of their incarceration. The tangible skills that participants obtained, such as exercise advice and breathing or journaling activities, were seen as ways that would help some with improving their well-being while still incarcerated. Even something as simple as better eating habits was appreciated by participants as it helped them feel better about themselves. The ability to interact with and learn from other women who had gone through similar struggles also helped some women open up more and realize more about themselves as they realized that others had shared their experiences. These bits of information helped to create a more supportive environment for some of the women, and it has helped improve their situation and has given them more hope about the possibility of future success.

While many of the women found the information provided helpful during their incarceration, there is still doubt as to how much this will help them upon release. For example, women participating in the healthy living workshop are attempting to eat healthier in prison but they still struggle with this given the restrictions of the facility. They would like to do better when they are released and have more resources available, but whether or not they will actually be able to access the necessary resources and improve their lifestyle upon release is not known from this study. In addition, women who have participated in the relationship workshop report trying to address and improve their relationships, but they have not been able to see if the advice and information that they have received will help them continue to improve their relationships when they are released and forced to deal with these relationships more closely. The services offered provide some information that is meant to help participants when they are released, but

they do not continue following release, and so how much assistance participants will have when reentering society may vary.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Recent research highlights that a large percentage of women in prison have difficulties with mental or physical health and place great value on relationships (Covington & Bloom, 2006; Faris & Miller, 2010; Grella & Greenwell, 2007; Gunter et al., 2012; Leverentz, 2011; McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014; Petersilia, 2005; Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009), and so it is not surprising that the three most popular reentry workshops offered at the facility in this study focus on these issues. The themes highlighted in the present research show support for patterns seen in the literature, and they also lend support for gender-responsive programming as many participants benefitted from the supportive environment and felt that they had been able to address at least some of their issues. As there are few studies focusing specifically on female reentry programs, this study contributes to the growing research on the subject, while also taking the different approach of focusing on the perceptions of currently incarcerated women who have participated in the programming.

The responses given by participants in this study reflect common themes seen in the growing body of literature of female offenders. All of these issues can play a significant role in determining how successful women will be upon release, and so they should be taken into consideration when developing reentry programs. One of the more prominent issues seen in female inmates is a history of abuse (Covington & Bloom, 2006; Gunter et al., 2012; Leverentz, 2011; Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009; White, 2012), and a number of women in this study, particularly those who had participated in the relationship workshop, described their struggles with abuse. DeHart's (2008) research suggests that prior victimization can produce very negative

effects on women later in life. The women in the current study who reported dealing with victimization would occasionally mention their future struggles with relationships. The abuse mentioned was either physical, sexual, or both, and the abusers were family members or partners. The trauma resulting from these experiences could contribute to poor coping mechanisms or influence future relationships, and so it is important to address these things prior to reentry.

Mental health diagnoses were also mentioned often, particularly among participants in the mental health workshop. Research indicates that female offenders have high rates of mental health diagnoses (Faris & Miller, 2010; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2011; Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009), and so the number of women reporting struggles with mental health and participating in the workshop on mental health is consistent with this literature. It is also important to note the responses participants had in regards to the healthy living workshop. A number enjoyed not only the healthy lifestyle aspect, but also the sections covering grief and stress. This indicates that participants may be benefitting mentally and physically from improving stress and managing grief. Given the prevalence of mental health issues among female offenders, offering treatment and related options as a part of reentry programming will likely be of a great benefit to a number of women struggling with their diagnosis. The workshops in this study focus more on offering information for mental health issues, and so they are lacking a component that would likely be very helpful for a number of participants. Women may be resorting to illegal activities, such as substance abuse, as a coping mechanism for mental illness and so providing resources and strategies to improve mental health may help lessen the likelihood of recidivism for some women. However, given the short length of the mental health workshop, it is unlikely that it provides the amount of treatment and counseling that many of these women may need.



Support for the relationship workshop is also consistent with the literature that suggests that women highly value their relationships (Covington & Bloom, 2006; McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014). The studies conducted by Barrick, Lattimore, and Visher (2014) and Cobbina (2010) highlight the importance of positive bonds and relationships. Most women in the current study responded that they wanted to work on having positive and healthy relationships, and this was viewed as something that could be very helpful to them in the future and upon release. While the literature does suggest that female offenders frequently struggle with leaving their children and maintaining relationships with them (Bruns, 2006; Cobbina, 2010; Collica, 2010; Faris & Miller, 2010; Loper & Tuerk, 2011), only some women in the relationship workshop mentioned working on the relationships with their children. Regardless, relationships are very important to take into consideration when discussing female offenders. The types of relationships, either positive or negative, a woman is involved in could impact how successful they are when they are released. Providing women in prison with skills and advice to help navigate relationships may help improve their reintegration process, particularly if they can focus on how to engage in more positive relationships. Some of the women surveyed in this study are attempting to engage in more positive relationships, and so they are working on improving their relationships with others who are also incarcerated in the facility, in addition to improving or changing the ones that they had on the outside.

The overall perceptions of the reentry workshops and programming were positive. Many reported enjoying the community environment, and they were able to take away some valuable information. The study conducted by Collica (2010) also reported how women participating in programs felt bonded to others and benefitted from the community atmosphere. For the women in this study, several were surprised to hear the stories of others, but they were comforted

knowing that they were not alone. Supportive environments are something that should be included in gender-specific programs (Covington & Bloom, 2006). Even with the overall support for the services, some workshops were still viewed as being better than others. The relationship and healthy living workshops both received more positive responses than the mental health workshop, with participants frequently discussing how they had learned many valuable things and were optimistic about the future. The mental health workshop still had some positive responses, but there were a number of participants who felt it would be greatly improved upon if it went into more detail and lasted longer. They felt that the information provided did not do enough to assist with mental health issues, and they would benefit more from a greater focus on treatment. In addition to the three workshops of interest in the current study, the employment workshop and the mandatory parole session were also frequently mentioned as being helpful and enjoyable. All of these workshops focus on issues that can impact reintegration, and so, while could be improved upon, are still a good starting point for reentry services. Improvements could still be made in regards to the lengths of the workshops and in the amount of information and treatment provided.

There have been a growing number of studies evaluating female reentry programs (Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2014; McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014; White, 2012), but they are still far less prominent than those for male offenders. Feminist criminology emphasizes the important differences between male and female offenders that need to be considered in order to develop more effective programming (Chesney-Lind & Morash, 2013; Covington & Bloom, 2006; White, 2012). Within the current study, the program appears to be doing a good job at providing services that can be tailored to the needs of female offenders, but there were some who stated that it could do better. For these women, histories of abuse, mental illness, and difficulties

in relationships were common and consistent with a number of findings in the literature. With the prominence of these issues and the impact that they may have on behavior, it is important that services offered in and out of prison work to address them. While they are certainly emphasized in the workshops, there could still be more attention paid to them and the impact that they are likely to have on reentry.

### **Recommendations**

Women expressed that there were benefits to participating in the workshops in terms of their well-being and health while they are still in the facility. However, there are still a number of improvements that could be made in order to increase the effectiveness of the workshops. One of the more common criticisms was that the workshops are too short in length and do not go into enough detail. These workshops are meant to address the common issues that female offenders may face, but they only touch upon issues that are very significant for many and have a range of impacts. Mental health issues are not something that can be addressed in a one-day workshop, and so further treatment or other options would be better to have. In addition, participants in these services are selected based upon their upcoming release dates. It may be beneficial to allow for services earlier during their incarceration, as the issues are not going to improve significantly if they are only addressed during a program that lasts no more than a few weeks and only takes place during the end of incarceration. If someone has been incarcerated for a number of years, they would likely benefit from having these services early on as it would enable them to obtain a great deal of information and advice, while also potentially reducing the stress of their incarceration. It would also be helpful for the services to offer more tangible skills than they currently do, such as those related to education and employment, as these can also be beneficial to women when they are released.

It does appear that the majority of these participants did enjoy having the opportunity to meet with their groups and learn new information or receive new advice. It provides them with something to break up their day while also providing different ways to cope with the stresses that they face within the facility. As a result of these views, it may be beneficial to allow for follow-up sessions or meetings for women who have completed some of the workshops, but would still prefer it if they could continue to meet and discuss their issues. Even if there were no formal follow-up workshops or sessions, allowing some of the women to continue to meet may allow them to obtain more information and work through what they are struggling with simply by giving them more time to work with each other and possibly with staff. At the very least, the supportive environment of the services is appreciated by many and it provides them with a healthier way to reduce stress. Even with this benefit, there is no guarantee that this information and advice will be utilized in reentry. If the services provided information on programs or opportunities available outside of prison, or if the services were extended, more could be done to help the women who are released.

### **Limitations**

This study is beneficial as it provides a detailed overview of how participants in reentry workshops regard their experiences; however, this study does have several limitations. First, only the three most popular workshops were discussed in detail with participants. There may be other workshops offered that participants found to be beneficial or that were in need of improvement. Without discussing the other workshops in detail, it is difficult to tell if the results shown from the workshops in this study are generalizable to other ones offered. In addition, participants were given information about the study and asked to volunteer by staff, or some were selected by staff to volunteer without having seen the information first, and so selection bias is possible. This

could potentially have lead to the overall positive responses given by the respondents if staff had selected only those who had enjoyed the workshops and were more enthusiastic about them. It is possible that there were some women who did not volunteer or who were not asked by staff that had different views of the workshops.

The services examined are also still being changed and developed, and so the experiences in the workshops may have been different for some depending on when they took the workshop. Women participating in other workshops aside from those of interest to this study were not interviewed, and so it is possible that they would have provided different views of the services in general. Out of all of the participants, most had participated in more than one workshop. It is possible that the views of those who participated in numerous workshops were more positive, as they may have been trying to gain as much as they could from the services. In addition, some may have been reluctant to offer any strong criticisms out of fear that the services may be taken away completely. Inmates who had not elected to participate in any workshops aside from the mandatory sessions were also not interviewed and so reasons why people choose not to participate in workshops were not able to be explored. This study also took place at one facility and so results may not be generalizable to other locations.

This study utilized qualitative methods in order to best examine the opinions and perceptions of participants. This method is very helpful for highlighting themes present among workshop participants. However, this study focused on the perceptions of those who were still incarcerated, and so it does not show how successful the women will be upon release. While many reported feeling that the workshops helped them in some way or provided them with valuable information, it does not guarantee that they will succeed or utilize that information upon

release. Recidivism rates were not examined and so whether participation in the workshops will reduce the likelihood of recidivism is unknown.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

This study focuses on the perceptions of female offenders who have participated in various aspects of reentry programming. Future research should continue to examine perceptions of participants as they can provide valuable insight into what specifically is or is not working. Future studies should also examine women's behavior upon release in order to see if what they gained from the workshops helped them when out of prison, or if they would have benefitted from any additional programs or skills. Quantitative studies should be conducted in order to determine whether reentry workshop participation has any effect on recidivism rates. In addition, more comprehensive studies should focus on the services in their entirety, and not just specific workshops, in order to gain a more complete picture. Doing so would allow for an examination of which aspects of reentry services are most beneficial.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on female reentry. It utilizes a qualitative approach to examine popular workshops in a relatively new program that correspond to common issues seen in female offenders. Much of the information gained was consistent with the literature that details these issues. The themes present in the interviews show that women in prison may benefit greatly from participating in gender-responsive reentry services. It appears that many of the women enjoyed the information and advice given by the workshops. Many are hopeful about their release and having better opportunities to use what they learned. For these reasons, having reentry programs that focus on the needs of offenders can be very beneficial for both the inmates and the correctional facility. This study suggests that women participating in these services value the opportunities and information provided. They also seem to appreciate

and benefit from the supportive environment offered by the services, and so it is possible that they will profit from having participated when they are eventually released. However, increasing the lengths of the workshop and providing the women with more opportunities to meet and work together would likely strengthen the services, as would offering the services earlier on during incarceration and providing more information and opportunities for treatment. Given the increases in female prisoners, and the high rates of recidivism, effective reentry programs are vital in order to reduce these numbers.

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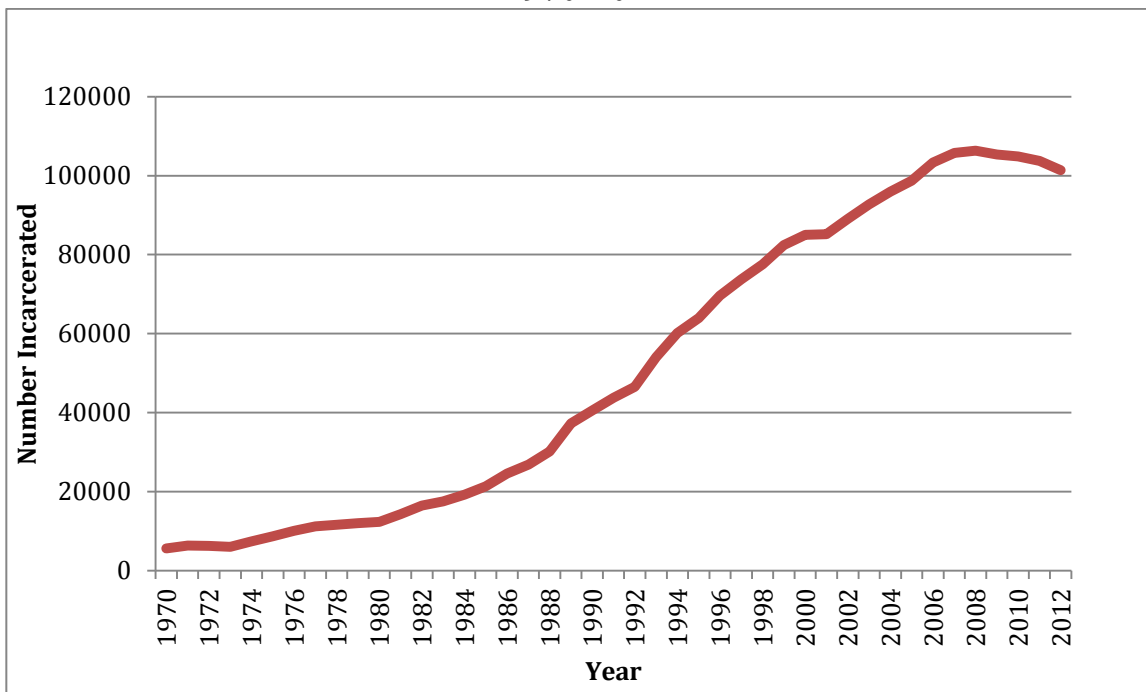
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Figure 1: Number of Female Prisoners Under State and Federal Jurisdiction, 1970-2012



Source: University of Albany Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 2013

## APPENDIX A: List of Workshops and Checklist

**REENTRY PLANNING WORKSHEET**

<b>Inmate Name:</b> _____	<b>Inmate Number:</b> _____
<b>Expected Release Date:</b> _____	

Place an **X** in the workshop(s)/certification that you are interested in enrolling in during your reentry process (these will include the mandatory workshops that you have been scheduled for). This document will be kept on file in the Reentry Services Office and will be placed in your Reentry Portfolio. All inmates are required to attend the **Orientation, Living Under Supervision, and Victim Impact & Awareness Workshops**. All remaining Workshops can be completed on a voluntary basis.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Orientation Workshop</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____                   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Stay on Track Workshop</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Living Under Supervision Workshop</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____      | <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Mental Health Workshop</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Victim Impact &amp; Awareness Workshop</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Budgeting Workshop</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Healthy Living Workshop</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____                           | <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Employment Workshop</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Parenting Workshop</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____                                | <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Relationship Workshop</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>P.R.E.P. (Renters) Workshop</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____                       | <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Vocational Certification</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Computer Basics</u></b><br>Date Completed: _____                                   |  |

*Additional Workshop Suggestions:*

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*Additional Workshops Completed:*

1.

Date Completed:

## APPENDIX B: List of Survey Questions

### All Participants

1. Which workshops have you participated in? Do you intend to participate in any more? If so, which ones?
2. Was there anything in particular that drew you to the workshop(s) that you participated in?
3. In what ways, if any, were the orientation and mandatory sessions helpful? What is the selection process for the workshops? What, if any, improvements to the process would you suggest?
4. How frequently did you meet for your workshop(s)? Would you have liked to meet more or less often? Who ran the workshop(s) and was it always led by the same person? Did you feel comfortable with the people leading the workshops?

### Mental Health Workshop

1. What goals did you have when signing up for the workshop and do you feel that you met them?
2. Do you feel the workshop helped you improve your mental health? How so? What, if anything, do you think could still be improved?
3. What specific activities or advice did you find most helpful and why?
4. What changes, if any, have you noticed in your thought process or behaviors? Have you seen improvements in what you wanted to address?
5. What, if anything, have you been doing outside of the workshop to improve your behavior and thought process? Do you plan on continuing any form of therapy following your release or the completion of the workshop? If so, what?

### Healthy Living

1. What did you want to gain from this workshop? Were there any specific things in your health that you wanted to work on, if so what? Did the workshop help with these things?
2. What skills have you obtained or learned from participating in this workshop? What are you still hoping to improve?
3. How has the workshop increased your awareness of certain habits or issues that you are struggling with? Have you been able to address them?
4. The workshop covers several topics relating to health. Was there any topic that you felt was particularly helpful or surprising? Is there anything else you would like to see covered in the workshop that wasn't?

Relationships

1. What goals did you have when signing up for the workshop? Did you meet those goals?
2. Was there any specific relationship that influenced your decision to pick this workshop? How has the workshop helped address this relationship, if at all?
3. What insight or advice have you gotten from the workshop? What have you learned anything about yourself or your relationships you did not expect to?
4. What do you think still needs work in your relationships? Did the workshop provide any helpful advice to address this? Is there anything else you would have liked the workshops to cover? If so, what?
5. What has been the most valuable thing you've learned from this workshop? How do you think this will help you in the future?