

Interventions for women offenders

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In recent years, female offenders have been of particular interest to the correctional field. In New Zealand, women offenders currently constitute six percent of the prison population and 20 percent of the community-sentenced population. While their numbers are a small proportion of the total offender population, they have significantly grown in recent years. For example, between 1986 and 2009, the women's prison population grew from 98 to 389, while the male prisoner population grew from 2359 to 6157.¹ This represents a fourfold increase in imprisoned females (a 297% increase), in comparison to a two-and-a-half times increase in imprisoned male offenders (an increase of 161%). The number of women offenders on community-based sentences has also grown. In 2005 there were 4877 women on community-based sentences and in 2010 there were 7496, a 54 percent increase in only five years.

A profile of women offenders in New Zealand suggests that they enter the criminal justice system with extensive problems and face barriers to successful reintegration, with Maori women being at the forefront of these problems. Alarming, Maori women have consistently been over-represented in the offender population. In 2010, approximately 60 percent of imprisoned women offenders and 50 percent of offenders on community sentences identified as Maori. These facts indicate a need to develop appropriate treatment programmes that address the multidimensional needs of women, and in particular Maori women, offenders.²

¹ Department of Corrections 2010.

² Moth & Hudson 1999.

Given the sizeable growth in the women offender population and the difficulties they present with, much debate has been generated regarding which factors are relevant to criminal behaviours of women and the most effective interventions to address these.

Two influential views currently inform rehabilitation for women offenders. The first approach is gender-neutral and argues that interventions based on generic theories of crime and principles of effective intervention (such as the risk, need and responsivity principles) are just as effective for women as they are for men.³ In contrast, supporters of a gender-informed approach assert that basing interventions on general theories is flawed, because they fail to take into account the gender-specific needs of women.⁴

This chapter evaluates the research and literature from both the gender-neutral and the gender-informed approaches and discusses whether the needs of women and men overlap or are distinct. The evidence supports the view that a gender-informed approach to treatment can usefully inform rehabilitation. Additionally, as Maori women offenders are over-represented in the female offender population, rehabilitation programmes should also be particularly responsive to their needs.

General theories of offending

The RNR model

A leading model, developed by advocates of the gender-neutral approach, that currently informs offender treatment, is the risk, needs, and responsivity (RNR) model.⁵ In brief, the risk principle asserts that the treatment intensity should match the level of risk, with the highest risk offenders receiving the most intensive treatment. The need principle is concerned with the targets for treatment and proposes that when certain dynamic risk factors (all criminogenic needs) are altered through intervention, reductions in reoffending should occur. The responsivity principle relates to the characteristics of programme delivery and proposes that the most effective interventions are based on social learning and cognitive behavioural principles.⁶ The responsivity principle also states that the style of treatment should be matched to

3 Andrews & Bonta 2010; Rettinger & Andrews 2010.

4 Martin, Kautt, Gelsthorpe 2009.

5 Andrews & Bonta 2003; 2006; 2010.

6 Dowdon & Andrews 1999.

the learning styles of offenders and take into account the capability and characteristics of offenders.

The PCC model

The theoretical basis of this model is the Psychology of Criminal Conduct (PCC).⁷ The PCC examines variation and individual differences in criminal behaviour and identifies the biological, personal, psychological, interpersonal, situational and social covariates of crime (the correlates, predictors and causal or functional variables of crime). Within this framework, explanations for criminal behaviour are drawn from a general personality and cognitive social learning (GPCSL) perspective. One example of this approach, described by Andrews and Bonta, is the personal, interpersonal, and community reinforcement (PIC-R) perspective on crime.⁸

The PIC-R model

The PIC-R model is grounded in social learning and self-control theories and integrates biological, sociological, cultural, family, interpersonal and personal factors in explaining criminal offending. The PIC-R proposes that antisocial and criminal behaviour is acquired and maintained through a combination of operant and classical conditioning learning experiences, observational learning and is under antecedent and consequent control. According to this theory, a crime will be committed when the anticipated rewards of the crime are assessed as outweighing the possible costs. Andrews and Bonta note that a number of factors influence this appraisal process.⁹ These include the characteristics of the immediate environment or situation, the person's attitudes, values and beliefs about antisocial behaviour, support for antisocial behaviour, delinquent associates, a history of antisocial behaviour, personality traits that encourage antisocial behaviour, cognitive emotional states (such as anger), self-regulation, self-management and problem solving skills that include rationalisations and justifications for criminal behaviour.

Broad economic, social and cultural contexts are seen as important background factors in an analysis of criminal offending. Within a social

7 Andrews & Bonta 2010.

8 Andrews & Bonta 2003, 2006, 2010.

9 Andrews and Bonta 2010.

system they define the parameters of dominant values, wealth and power, and control the distributions of rewards and costs.

Andrews and Bonta identified the major risk factors for criminal offending. The most powerful — the ‘big four’ risk factors — include antisocial cognition (antisocial values, attitudes and beliefs that support criminal offending), antisocial associates, a history of past antisocial behaviour and antisocial personality pattern (history of conduct problems and violations of rules, self-centeredness, hostility, callousness, difficulties with controlling impulsive behaviours, poor problem solving skills).¹⁰ Four other more moderate risk factors include substance abuse, family problems, difficulties in school or work, and problematic leisure activities.

There is a dearth of research that directly evaluates the applicability of the PIC-R for women offenders. However, given that the PIC-R is grounded in social learning and self-control theories, and these may be relevant in explaining female offending, it is appropriate to examine the theories and associated research.¹¹

Self-control theory

Self-control theory makes two major claims relating to self-control.¹² Firstly, low self-control is seen to be the most important ‘individual level cause of crime’, and this is mediated by opportunity to commit crime.¹³

According to this theory, individuals differ in their ability to control their urges for immediate gratification. People with low self-control are more likely to engage in criminal or deviant behaviour than people with high self-control. Weak self-control in children is a result of weak self-controls exercised by parents. These include weak parent to child attachments, poor parental skills and supervision, parental failure to recognise deviant behaviour, and ineffective punishments. In self-control theory, social learning factors, especially delinquent associates and pro-criminal attitudes, are minimised as risk factors.

People with low self-control are characterised as impulsive, insensitive, risk taking, short sighted, physical as opposed to mental, and non-

¹⁰ Andrews and Bonta 2003, 2006, 2010.

¹¹ Blanchette & Brown 2006.

¹² Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990.

¹³ *Ibid*, p 232.

verbal. Low self-control will result in crime or antisocial behaviour only when the opportunity to engage in the behaviours is present.

The second proposition of self-control theory is that the consequences of low self-control are similar in all circumstances with all people. Therefore variations in self-control will account for the variance in criminal behaviour for all classes of individuals. A number of studies have empirically assessed self-control theory and found self-control to be related to criminal behaviour for both male and female offenders.¹⁴

In a meta-analysis of existing empirical studies, Pratt and Cullen examined Gottfredson and Hirschi's self-control theory.¹⁵ Their sample comprised twenty one studies that contained 126 effect size estimates. The analyses provided significant empirical support for the theory that low self-control is a strong predictor of crime across both genders. Pratt and Cullen found that the interaction between criminal opportunity and self-control was strongly related to crime. The analyses also revealed that, contrary to Gottfredson and Hirschi's proposals, in addition to low self-control, antisocial associates and antisocial attitudes were also risk factors. Indeed, when these social learning variables were included they greatly assisted in predicting criminal behaviour.

Further support for the self-control theory can also be found in a meta-analysis by Andrews and Dowdon.¹⁶ They specifically examined the principles of effective correctional treatments for women offenders. Their results indicated that when self-control deficits were specifically targeted, there was a 22 percent reduction in reoffending rates.

It is well documented that, in general, males commit more crimes and commit them more frequently than females. Self-control theory suggests that this does not assume that that one gender is more criminal or more likely to possess a criminality trait than the other.¹⁷ Instead it is proposed that males have substantially lower self-control than females, because of variations in the ways parents and other social and community institutions manage male and female children. The theory notes that 'opportunity' to commit crimes is also an influence on the differences between male and female offending. However, the theory

14 e.g. Alarid, Burton & Cullen 2000; Burton, Cullen, Evans, Alarid & Dunaway 1998; Pratt & Cullen 2000; Simons, Miller & Aigner 1980.

15 Pratt and Cullen 2000.

16 Andrews & Dowdon 1999.

17 Farrington & Painter 2004; Blanchette & Brown 2006.

states that the main reason for the differences between male and female offending is a consequence of differences in their level of self-control.¹⁸

A number of studies have looked at whether self-control can account for the gender differences in crime. To date the results have been mixed. In one study Burton, Cullen, Evans, Alarid and Dunaway assessed the ability of self-control to account for the gender gap, and whether self-control could account for variations in criminal behaviours within gender groups.¹⁹ Their community sample of 555 adult males and females provided self-reports on twenty various criminal acts in the previous twelve months. Self-control (according to Gottfredson and Hirschi's descriptions) was measured on a twelve item index. The results indicated that when self-control was introduced into the analysis of the relationship between crime and gender, gender effects in predicting offending were eliminated. However, when males and females were analysed separately, self-control was related differentially to male and female offending.

Tittle, Ward and Grasmick looked at whether self-control could explain the differences in criminal or deviant behaviour among different categories of people and whether the effects of self-control were robust and comparable in all circumstances.²⁰ Their study sample included 350 adult males from the community, and they used four measures of self-control, four measures of crime or deviance, and nine control variables. The self-control measures included:

1. the Grasmick *et al* factor-based scale²¹
2. an additively scored version of the Grasmick *et al* scale
3. a behaviourally based factor scale and
4. a ten-item behaviourally based variety index.

The dependent measures included:

1. a measure of past offences
2. a measure of projections of future offences

18 Tittle, Ward & Grasmick 2003; Grasmick, Tittle, Bursik & Arneklev 1993.

19 Burton, Cullen, Evans, Alarid & Dunaway 1999.

20 Tittle, Ward & Grasmick 2003.

21 Grasmick *et al* 1993.

3. a factor-based general deviance scale,
4. a factor-based Gottfredson and Hirschi-based crime scale.

The analyses provided considerable support for the theory's implications that self-control is the major factor in explaining crime or deviance. All measures of self-control predicted crime or deviance when other factors antecedent to self-control were controlled. Self-control could also explain the differences in criminal or deviant behaviour between males and females. Controlling the behavioural measures of self-control reduced the relationships between gender, age, and misbehaviour below significance.

However, the results were not as supportive of the second major implication that the effects of self-control are equally likely for all subcategories of the population (general, in other words). The idea of generality implies that self-control operates similarly for males and females and for the various age groupings. There was mixed evidence for the generality hypothesis. Self-control did not seem to predict misbehaviour equally well among age categories.

Other studies have found that self-control alone did not account for the variances in gender differences. LaGrange and Silverman's study looked at whether the general theory of crime, specifically relating to self-control and opportunity, could explain gender differences in crime.²² The study participants were 2095 Canadian secondary school students, including 961 males (46%) and 1134 females (54%), aged from eleven to eighteen years. Measures of low self-control included personality trait items, such as impulsivity, risk taking, carelessness, temper and present oriented. Items about the frequency of smoking and drinking were also included in the measures of self-control. Items measuring delinquent opportunity included questions about parental supervision (such as knowledge of whereabouts, companions, and curfews), and more general adult supervision (such as, frequency of non-supervised peer interactions, driving with friends with nowhere special to go). Delinquency was measured by a twenty item scale containing questions about the frequency of actions corresponding to crimes, including property offences (such as shoplifting, theft), violent offences (such as assaults, using weapons, and armed robbery), drug

22 LaGrange & Silverman 1999.

offences (either using or selling) and other vandalism (such as to school windows or public buildings).

The results indicated that, as predicted by self-control theory, females differed significantly in their tendencies for delinquent behaviours and in the degree to which they reported adult or parental supervision. Female students scored significantly lower on measures of impulsivity, risk-seeking and present orientation than their male counterparts. There were also significant differences in opportunity between the genders, with females receiving more parental and adult supervision.

The differences between males and females also varied depending on how delinquency was measured. The differences were greater for general delinquency and property offences than for violent or drug offences. Property offences made up half of the offences on the delinquency items and were the most frequently reported, particularly by females. These findings suggested to the researchers that the factor structure of low self-control differs between males and females, and that there may also be differing causal factors leading to male and female offending. A male preference for risk-seeking was overall the most striking factor in explaining gender differences.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory is underpinned by traditional learning theory principles (such as environmental factors, and classical and operant conditioning) but also proposes that people learn criminal behaviour through their associations with others.²³ Three main mechanisms are involved in the learning process:

1. The differential reinforcement principle proposes that people are more likely to engage in and repeat criminal behaviour if it is frequently reinforced, either positively (such as through financial gain, social or familial approval, pleasure) or negatively (such as using drugs to avoid ridicule of peers), and infrequently punished.
2. Beliefs supporting criminal behaviour are developed through involvement with peers who hold 'like' beliefs.
3. Modelling refers to imitating the behaviour of others that one has observed, especially those held in high regard. Akers proposed that

²³ Bandura 1977; Akers & Jensen 2003.

social learning factors can account for the variations in criminal behaviour for various groups, including age, race, ethnicity and gender.²⁴

There is considerable support for the role of social learning factors in female offending.²⁵ Indirect evidence supports the view that women have special criminogenic needs. For example, Dowdon and Andrews, in a meta-analytic review, examined the principles of effective correctional treatment (including risk, needs and responsivity) for female offenders.²⁶ The meta-analysis consisted of forty five effect sizes that were obtained from twenty six studies. There was strong support for the principles of risk, need and responsivity as contributors to treatment outcomes of reduced reoffending for female offenders. Though the authors pointed out some specific findings, none of the studies in their meta-analysis focused on dealing with victimisation or self-esteem issues, and it remained unclear whether these were criminogenic or non-criminogenic needs. In terms of responsivity, they explored neither gender as a specific issue, nor whether relation-focused treatments, or making treatment programmes more responsive to the specific learning styles of women, had any impact on reoffending.

Gender-informed approaches

Supporters of the gender-informed approaches assert that females have gender-specific developmental pathways to antisocial behaviour and crime.²⁷ They maintain that this is reflected in well-established gender differences in the prevalence, incidence and developmental pathways of antisocial behaviour.²⁸

A commonly cited pathway to female offending is the 'street woman' pathway.²⁹ Street women are those who run away from abusive households or are drawn to the excitement of the street. Life on the streets leads to alcohol and drug use and addiction. In turn, these

24 Akers 1998.

25 Blanchette & Brown 2006; Piquero, Gover, MacDonald, Piquero 2005; Jennings, Maldonado-Molina & Komro 2010.

26 Dowdon & Andrews 1999.

27 Nagin, Farrington & Moffit, 1995; Holsinger & Holsinger; 2005.

28 Blanchette & Browne 2006; Hannah-Moffat & Shaw 2001.

29 Daly 1992.

women make a living on the street, supporting drug addiction through prostitution and criminal offending, such as theft and selling drugs.

Daly, in a study that used offender biographies from pre-sentence reports, assessed whether the street woman pathway to offending accurately represented the offending pathways of 40 women convicted in felony court in New Haven, Connecticut between 1981 and 1985.³⁰

The results indicated that the Street Woman scenario characterised the offending pathways of a quarter of the women (n = 10). With further qualitative analysis, Daly identified four other pathways:

- *Harmed and harming women* (n = 15) made up 37.5 percent of the sample. These women experienced physical or sexual abuse or neglect as children. By their teens they were using alcohol and drugs, had problems with addiction, and were violent. They generally had psychological and emotional difficulties as adults and could not cope with difficult situations.
- *Battered women* (n = 5), characterised 12.5 percent of the offenders. These women were in relationships with violent men. Their offending was a direct result of their experiences of being battered (for example, fighting).
- *Drug connected women* (n = 6) comprised five percent of the sample. They used or sold drugs in their relationships with boyfriends or family members. Rather than being addicted, their drug use was recent and experimental, and they did not have extensive previous criminal histories.
- *Other women* (n = 4), characterised about ten percent of the women. None of these women had a problem with drugs or alcohol, they had not experienced abusive home environments and did not have criminal histories. Their offending was related to a desire for more money and a better lifestyle than they had.

In Daly's study, the women's pathway categories did not accurately describe the offence pathways of forty male offenders, who were also convicted in felony court.³¹ There was some overlap with 20 percent of the sample (n = 8) being described as 'harmed and harming men'; 38 percent as 'street men' (n = 15), and 7.5 percent as 'drug connected

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

men' (n = 3). However, Daly identified another pathway for men she called 'the costs and excesses of masculinity'. Men on this pathway were sub-classified as:

- *Explosively violent men* (used violence to control and dominate others)
- *Bad luck men* (at the wrong place at the wrong time)
- *Masculine gaming* (crime as a means to show masculine prowess and for obtaining social rewards).³²

In summary, the 'street' category characterised more men (38%) than it did women (25%). Fewer men than women were characterised by the following categories: the harmed or harming category characterised 20 percent of the men versus 37.5 percent of the women; or drug connected — 7.5 percent of men versus 12.5 percent of women. A large percentage of the male offending was characterised by the costs and excesses of masculinity pathway (35%, a unique pathway for men). Daly suggested that she obtained these results because her categories were derived from empirical research with women and while there was overlap, the men did not easily fit into the categories.

While this study provides some support for the pathways model, Blanchette and Brown noted that direct evaluations of the theory are absent.³³ A recent review of research in the area done by Widom indicated that childhood maltreatment does predict delinquency.³⁴ However, to provide full support for the pathways model, research needs to show that experiences of childhood victimisation can more specifically explain delinquency in females than males. To date, research has provided mixed results.³⁵

Women offender rehabilitation needs

Researchers from the gender-neutral approach assert female and male offenders share common criminogenic needs. However, they also acknowledge that women may have some specific treatment and rehabilitative needs. According to these researchers, effective treatment is

³² Simpson, Yahner & Dugan 2008.

³³ Blanchette & Brown 2006.

³⁴ Widom 2003.

³⁵ Widom 2000; Trickett & Gordis 2004; Blanchette & Brown 2006.

dependent on the accurate identification and targeting of criminogenic needs.³⁶ Researchers from the gender responsive approaches propose that given their different pathways to criminal offending, women have different risk/need factors than those of their male counterparts.³⁷ For example, women have a higher prevalence of mental health problems, victimisation experiences, extensive relationship and child care problems, difficulties with substance abuse and physical health issues. They also differ in both the rate and degree of education, employment and financial disadvantage.³⁸

Some researchers have suggested that there may be two classes of risk factors or criminogenic needs for women offenders; those that are gender-specific and those common to both men and women. However, the nature of their relationship to treatment outcome may be different for women.³⁹

Until quite recently, few studies examined whether women and men share the same needs, or have different needs. The situation is now changing with more research specifically looking at women offenders being undertaken. Derived from PIC-R theory, a number of meta-analyses have provided evidence for the predictive validity of the the 'big four' and 'moderate four' (making up the 'central eight') risk/need factors as effective predictors of recidivism. These findings have been consistent across various offender populations.⁴⁰

One widely used instrument for assessing needs among offender populations is the Level of Service Inventory.⁴¹ The LSI-R has more recently been revised to form the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI).⁴² The instrument covers the three major principles for effective intervention — risk, need and responsivity. Ten original LSI-R subcomponents have been reorganised to more clearly reflect the 'central eight' risk/need factors and are included in the first section of the LS/CMI. These include criminal history, education and employment, finance, family and marital relationships, accommodation, use of leisure or recreation time, companions, alcohol or drug problems, emotional

36 Hollin & Palmer 2006.

37 Hannah-Moffat 2004.

38 Chesney-Lind 1989; Covington & Bloom 1999.

39 e.g. Blanchette 2002; Blanchette & Brown 2006.

40 See Andrews & Bonta 2010 p 65.

41 Andrews & Bonta 1995.

42 Andrews, Bonta & Wormith 2004.

or personal issues, and attitudes or orientation. Scoring allows for each of the subcomponents, and these give a total score. The total score can be translated into a score that predicts the likelihood of future offending.

The LS/CMI General Risk/Needs section is the most crucial for overall assessment of risk. However, other sections measure specific risk and need factors that may be relevant to distinct forms of criminal behaviours, prison experiences, social factors, client health and mental health issues. They may also measure special responsivity factors including gender-specific issues such as women's health, victimisation issues, mothering issues, employment, and cultural issues. It is also important to consider other non-criminogenic needs (such as health care, mental health problems, religious or spiritual needs, and social welfare concerns) as responsivity factors. It is suggested that not addressing these needs will have an impact on the 'potential effectiveness of other interventions that do target criminogenic needs'.⁴³

Recent meta-analytic studies have suggested that the LSI-R/LSCMI can effectively predict recidivism for adults.⁴⁴ However, some scholars propose that the LSI-R was developed on the basis of research with predominantly male offenders and is therefore a weak predictor of criminal behaviour in women. To assess this claim, Smith, Cullen and Latessa undertook a meta-analysis involving twenty five studies and twenty seven effect sizes derived from information on 14,737 female offenders.⁴⁵ Offenders were tracked for either more than two years, or between thirteen and twenty-four months, with a very small number of studies following offenders for twelve months or less. Outcome measures included reincarceration or reconviction, and a small number of studies included other measures (such as self-reports, violations of community sentences or rearrest). Results indicated that the LSI-R could effectively predict criminal behaviour for female offenders. Sample comparisons based on gender produced similar effect sizes for males and females.

Rettinger and Andrews' study investigated the degree to which the 'central eight' risk factors assessed with the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI) and gender-specific factors were

43 *Ibid.*

44 Andrews & Bonta 2010; Hollin & Palmer 2006; Smith, Goggin & Gendreau 2002.

45 Smith, Cullen & Latessa 2009.

predictive of offending in a sample of 411 participants.⁴⁶ The gender-specific items included emotional distress, minority status, history of abuse, self-abuse, history of suicide, relationship concerns, mental health system involvement, financial problems, single parenthood status and stress resulting from parenting responsibilities.

Analyses revealed that general and violent recidivism and the number of new offences by adult female offenders were predicted at significant levels by an assessment of the central eight risk factors. This was evident across contexts, including type of correctional setting, age, race, socioeconomic distress, single parenthood, traumatic life history and a variety of emotional and social distress experiences. The women in the study reported high rates of stressed and distressing circumstances, but many of the factors proposed as particularly relevant to female offending had no incremental predictive validity beyond the central eight risk factors. There was support for the predictive validity of financial problems and personal misfortune among low risk/low need women. The researchers noted that concerns with finances, parenting and personal distress may best be viewed not as major risk and criminogenic need factors but as minor risk factors and non-criminogenic needs or 'responsivity' factors.

The results support the suggestion that the central eight risk factors are applicable for women who follow a gendered pathway. Elements central in many of the pathways (for example, violence experienced and delivered, substance abuse, self-harm, and childhood and adulthood abuse) failed to eliminate the validity of LS/CMI General Risk/Need.

A study by Heilbrun and colleagues examined whether the rehabilitation needs of male and female offenders differed, with a specific focus on social relationships, employment and financial difficulties as distinguishing rehabilitative factors.⁴⁷ Measures reported in this study included the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R)⁴⁸ and the Level of Service-Case Management Inventory (LS-CMI).⁴⁹ The results indicated that there was significant overlap in risks and needs between male and female offenders. The study also noted some important differences between males and females. Females had higher ratings in the financial

46 Rettinger & Andrews 2010.

47 Heilbrun, DeMatteo, Fretz, Erickson, Yasuhara & Anumba 2008.

48 Andrews & Bonta 2001.

49 Andrews, Bonta & Wormith 2004.

domains, indicating that they had more extensive financial difficulties than the male offenders. They also had greater difficulties than males in the family and marital domain (such as the current level of family or marital interactions and relationships) and were more likely to be divorced or widowed, while males were more likely to be single. Female offenders had significantly higher ratings than males in companion domains (such as quality of friends and acquaintances), suggesting that they are more likely to commit crimes with males or alone, rather than with female peers. The researchers noted that these need areas may be more criminogenic for female offenders than for male offenders.

Farrington and Painter examined socioeconomic, family and childrearing risk factors for offending (measured by convictions) of boys and girls, and compared criminal careers of males and females in the same families.⁵⁰ Their research analysed data from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development done in the 1960s and 1970s. This was a prospective longitudinal survey of London boys (born in the 1950s) aged eight to forty eight years. In this study, Farrington and Painter also investigated childhood risk factors of their brothers and sisters and compared the results with those obtained for the boys. The analyses were based on 397 families that had 397 study males, their 494 brothers and 519 sisters. Statistical analyses of socioeconomic, family and child rearing risk factors were undertaken (such as product moment phi correlations, odds ratios, multivariate analyses logistic regression analyses).

The most salient risk factors for brothers and sisters (including early onset and frequent offenders) were a convicted mother, a convicted father, a delinquent sibling, large family size, separation from a parent, poor housing, attending a high delinquency rate school, harsh or erratic parental discipline, poor parental supervision, low family income and parental conflict. There were also some differences in risk factors for brothers and sisters. Parental risk factors, for instance nervous fathers and mothers or poorly educated mothers and fathers, were more important risk factors for brothers than for sisters. On the other hand, socioeconomic factors such as low social class, low family income, poor housing, and large family size predicted offending more strongly for sisters than for brothers. Additionally, child rearing factors such

50 Farrington & Painter 2004.

as harsh or erratic discipline, poor parental supervision, low praise by parents, low parental interest in the children, parental conflict, and low parental interest in education were also stronger predictors for sisters than for brothers.

Risk factors tended to be stronger predictors of offending for sisters than for brothers. For instance, for early onset offenders, the absence or presence of low family income was a better predictor of offending by sisters. Similarly, the presence of more risk factors predicted offending more accurately for sisters than for brothers. There were also gender differences in the predictability of different risk factors. Parental characteristics were more important for brothers, and child rearing factors were more important of sisters.

Farrington and Painter noted that existing theories of offending do not explain these results.⁵¹ For example, they do not predict the degree to which certain risk factors are more or less important for boys and girls. For boys, parental characteristics are more important; for girls, socioeconomic and child rearing factors are more important. Criminal parents are equally important for both boys and girls.

Van Voorhis, Wright, Salisbury & Bauman assessed whether using gender-specific supplements with gender-neutral assessments added further predictive accuracy to assessments.⁵² Institutional misconduct and recidivism outcome measures were obtained for eight samples of women offenders either in prison, on probation or at pre-release. Also, two supplements were developed for testing. The first supplement consisted of scales measuring self-esteem, self-efficacy, victimisation as an adult, child abuse, parental stress and relationship dysfunction. For the second supplement all of the factors from the first supplement were included. However, some variables found in the gender-neutral assessments were restructured to a more gender-responsive format and also included, as were protective factors or strengths. These included scales measuring current symptoms of depression, current symptoms of psychosis, mental health history, family (of origin) support, family (of origin) conflict, relationship support, housing safety, anger or hostility and educational strengths. These were used with Level of Service Inventory-revised (LSI-R).⁵³

51 *Ibid.*

52 Van Voorhis, Wright, Salisbury & Bauman 2010.

53 Andrews & Bonta 1995.

The findings of the study indicated that the gender-neutral dynamic risk/need variables were predictive of women's offending. Including the supplementary gender responsive scales created even more powerful prediction. In six of the eight samples, subsets of gender responsive scales obtained statistical significance. Gender responsive items were identified for the three settings, resulting in the development of separate supplementary assessments for each.

1. For imprisoned offenders, the items were child abuse, anger or hostility, relationship dysfunction, family support and current mental health issues.
2. For probation samples, the items were parental stress, family support, self-efficacy, educational assets, housing safety, anger or hostility issues and current mental health.
3. For released offenders, the items included adult victimisation, anger or hostility, educational issues and family support.
4. However, the results also indicated that the women in the study had different treatment priorities. For example, in community correctional settings the needs most associated with future offending were substance abuse, economic, educational, and parental and mental health needs; whereas for incarcerated offenders, trauma, dysfunctional relationships and mental health concerns were key to prison adjustment.

A New Zealand rehabilitation programme for women offenders

The research outlined in this chapter supports the claim that general theories of crime explain female offending, and that the treatment needs of women offenders can be addressed from within a risk, needs and responsivity framework. However, the evidence also supports the view that treatment programmes also need to acknowledge the gender-specific features of women offenders.

New Zealand Correctional Services responded to the identified needs of women in the development of a group treatment programme. While the programme is firmly based on the principles of risk, needs and responsivity, issues specific to women offenders have also been considered. The programme was developed on the basis that the majority of women are likely to be young Maori women. To be

culturally responsive, the programme recognises and incorporates Maori protocol, customs and concepts as its foundation. Additionally, it recognises the cultural, social and economic inequalities of women.

Relational needs have also been incorporated within the programme structure.⁵⁴ Relational theory proposes that ‘connection’ is a basic human need, and this need is especially strong in women.⁵⁵ True connections are mutual, empathic, creative, energy releasing and empowering for all participants. On this basis, any programme should facilitate mutuality, trust, and empathy, and have a strong focus on assisting women to develop positive relationships with other people (such as with other group members, family, children, partners and friends).

The intervention targets of the programme includes antisocial attitudes, thinking and emotions, criminal associates, poor self-control or impulsivity, self-management, problem solving skills, substance abuse problems as they relate to the offence process, and relationship difficulties (marital and family). The additional emotional or personal needs of women are also acknowledged within the programme as they relate to offending. Furthermore, where women are identified as having substance abuse, victimisation or mental health issues they are referred to appropriate services.

The programme has the following nine components:

1. assessment
2. orientation
3. offence mapping
4. mindfulness
5. cognitive restructuring
6. emotional regulation/mood management skills
7. distress tolerance skills
8. interpersonal effectiveness (including an analysis of family, intimate, peer and antisocial relationships and learning communication, conflict resolution and problem solving skills)
9. a relapse prevention component.

⁵⁴ Covington 1998.

⁵⁵ Jordan, Kaplan, Miller *et al* 1991; cited in Covington 1998.

To be responsive for women offenders, the programme is delivered in a style and mode that is consistent with the ability and learning style of the programme participants. It aims for a balance of process and content. There is a focus on facilitation based on group-psychotherapy elements, a Socratic approach and the use of group interpersonal and verbal skills, self-regulation and self-reflection. These are balanced with content where concrete techniques will be used, including role-plays, modelling, drama, action methods, interactive exercises and art.

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