

**PRACTICUM REPORT**

Exploring 'What Works' at the Manitoba Youth Centre

with

Young Female Offenders

University of Manitoba  
Faculty of Social Work

Master's of Social Work

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**Exploring 'What Works' at the Manitoba Youth Centre with  
Young Female Offenders**

**BY**

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**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University  
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree  
of  
MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted and grateful to all the young women who I have come to know through this practicum process. These courageous young women shared their personal experiences, thoughts and feelings which I feel privileged to bear witness to; their voices provided me with an amazingly rich and meaningful learning experience. I am grateful to the Manitoba Youth Centre who provided me with the opportunity to explore a topic near and dear to my heart and offered their support throughout this process. Specifically, I wish to thank Shirley Mexiner, Jocelyn Borjklund and Winsome Russel for their time, support, sharing their knowledge and offering me an invaluable learning experience.

I would also like to extend a special thanks to my advisor Denis Bracken who supported me throughout this degree and dedicated his time, patience and guidance throughout this practicum. In addition, I would like to thank Diane-Hiebert Murphy who took an interest in this topic and provided me with valuable insight into this process.

To my parents for their unconditional love and support, this would have never been possible without them. Lastly, to my husband Darryl who took the brunt of stress that was endured throughout this journey. Thank-you Darryl for encouraging me to stay true to what I believe in.

## CHAPTER 1

### PERSONAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

#### **Introduction**

The following Practicum took place at the Manitoba Youth Centre (hereinafter MYC) working with young female offenders. The MYC delivers a variety of group programs to address the needs of young women who come in conflict with the law. The type of programs delivered at the Manitoba Youth Centre is determined by the institution based on the needs of the young women who currently reside at the MYC. Overall, group programs are usually delivered within a model that incorporates education and intervention. The aim or objective of group intervention is to provide young women with new information and skills that will assist them once released back into the community. Group programs also assist young women in changing negative behaviours, strengthening coping skills and problem solving with personal issues.

There were three educational objectives in this practicum. First, was to develop knowledge of the youth criminal justice system. This area consists of understanding the philosophy and law behind incarcerating young offenders, exploring their needs and the current intervention models used in addressing the needs and criminal behaviour of female youth. In addition, this area includes knowledge of the mandate of MYC and the process and procedures of entering young women into program intervention. The second area of educational benefit focuses on skills required of group facilitators in delivering group intervention to young incarcerated women. This includes a description of specific skills required for working with incarcerated youth. A number of different intervention techniques and processes were also explored and a method of examining how effective

these techniques was employed. The last objective of this practicum was the central focus of this report. The literature review indicates that a feminist model to intervention with young woman is the most effective. A feminist model proposes three important principles of empowerment, connection and safety as vital in effective group programming for youth. Two main themes were explored. First, was to examine whether or not these principles can be achieved within a correctional setting. Secondly, how would we know if we were achieving empowerment, safety and connection?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

The following literature review is an exploration of therapeutic work (helping, healing, counselling and other intervention) with incarcerated young women. Presently, there is limited literature and research available on therapeutic and other program services for incarcerated young women. Consequently, the academic discussion on program approaches with imprisoned young women is restricted due to the scarcity of such resources. There has been more research conducted on incarcerated adult women, which can enhance our understanding of gender issues and further assist in the development of gender appropriate programming for youth.

The first review is of the *Young Offenders Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. Y-1 (hereinafter YOA), followed by a discussion of young women in conflict with the law and a description of available literature on young females who are incarcerated. This is followed by a review of feminist intervention within correctional facilities. While

intervention based in post modernism is not the most common approach within corrections, a review of available literature utilizing this approach with groups and within correctional facilities will be considered. Lastly, I will provide a very brief overview of the 'What Work's' literature as this has recently had an impact on the way correctional facilities are addressing programming issues.

Gayle K. Horii is a woman who is serving a life sentence in prison. Her words of wisdom are a source of inspiration and remind us of the importance of both policy issues and current work in the prison system. Policy issues are not the intention of this review, however, in listening to Gail Horii's words let us keep in mind throughout this journey the importance of larger policy issues and work towards positive solutions for change, while trying to conduct meaningful work at present.

Put your faith and your trust in the world circles of humanitarians, scholars, creative and strong feminists, Constitutional experts, socio-political activists and penal abolitionists. Their analyses could best ensure both humane treatment within the walls while formulating a practical strategy to end the use of imprisonment as the first reaction to "criminal behaviour" (2000, p. 112).

### **Young Offenders Act (YOA)**

The YOA became law in 1984, and replaced the Juvenile Delinquents Act of 1908 (Marron, 1992, p. 191). The YOA is a federal statute that determines the procedure to be followed by the police and the judicial system when action has been taken against a young person who has come into conflict with the law. While the YOA is a federal

statute, federalism assigns the administration of youth justice to the Provinces. This means that the operation and administration of youth court and corrections falls under the responsibility of the Province.

Offences under the YOA include all Federal Acts and Regulations, however, the majority of cases that emerge are cases where the young offender has committed an offence under *The Criminal Code*, R.S.C. 1985, Chap. C-46, (Pink and Perrier, 1992, p. 129). The YOA applies to youth who are over 12 years old and under 18 years of age at the time the offence occurred, not the time the individual is charged or in court (Pink and Perrier, 1992, p. 130). The philosophical groundings of the YOA constitutes that young persons must take responsibility for their actions and society must be protected from illegal behaviour (Pink and Perrier, 1992, p. 130). This principle is consistent with Criminal Law which the YOA is a component of. However, the YOA indicates that young people are not yet adults, they have not achieved the same maturity as adults, and young persons have special needs and require assistance. Accordingly, young persons' rights extend to the "right to the least possible interference with freedom that is consistent to the protection of society" (Pink and Perrier, 1992, p. 131). The YOA also asserts that youth are the primary responsibility of their parents and should only be removed from parental supervision when necessary for the protection of society.

The YOA states that for offences that require the protection of society, a young person is best served by rehabilitation, which falls under the responsibility of the Province. Section 3. (1) (c.1) of the YOA states as follows: "the protection of society, which is a primary objective of the criminal law applicable to youth, is best served by rehabilitation, wherever possible, of young persons who commit offences, and

rehabilitation is best achieved by addressing the needs and circumstances of a young person that are relevant to the young person's offending behaviour". Therefore, programming within youth correctional facilities should be guided by the principles of rehabilitation as enunciated in the YOA.

Recently the YOA has been revamped; on February 12, 2002 the Federal Department of Justice stated in a news release that the proposed new legislation titled the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* received Royal Assent. This means that the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* will replace the YOA (Department of Justice Canada, 2002). However, this Act will not come into law until April 2003 well after the duration of this practicum.

### **Introduction to the Criminal Justice System & Youth in Conflict with the Law**

The Criminal Justice System has historically and presently been dominated by a male-defined philosophy, and a male-centred approach to the criminal justice system (Comack, 1996; Mann, 2000; Marron 1992; Tanner, 2001). Like the majority of other academic disciplines, criminology has primarily focussed on the activities and interests of men and in the case of youth, boys (Comack, 1996; Mann, 2000; Tanner, 2001). It has only been recently that research has begun to emerge on young women. Such research confirms that there is a lack of information on young women who come in conflict with the law. Julian Tanner (2001) affirms this notion in her book *Teenage Troubles: Youth and Deviance in Canada*:

All the theories, and much of the research, that has been looked at so far are concerned primarily with male behaviour, written from a male perspective, and judged according to a male standard. If females make an appearance at all, it is as an afterthought or a footnote-a sideshow to a

main event dominated by male rebels (p. 178).

In addition to being ignored, Tanner (2001) suggests that early theories of young women in conflict with the law have “mythologised” and “misrepresented” young women.

Tanner (2001) further states that young women “have been depicted as solitary sexual deviants whose condition is best understood in terms of personal pathology” (p. 179). On the contrary males who come in conflict with the law have traditionally been perceived as a threat to public order.

In order to develop appropriate programming to address the needs of young women there needs to be a better understanding of what brings young women into conflict with the law. The May 1998 *Strategy for the Renewal of Youth Justice* also affirms that there is a “clear need for research in this area, so that appropriate programs for young woman can be developed” (Mann, 2000, p. 221). While theories on what brings young women in conflict with the law are not the full focus of this review, these issues are vital when thinking about what type of programming is required to address the needs of young women in conflict with the law.

Recently, female youth in conflict with the law have received a great deal of attention from the media, academics, and policy makers. Raymond Corrado, Candice Cohen and M. Irwin (2000) in their article *The Incarceration of Female Young Offenders: Protection for Whom?* summarize the contentious issues around young women who come in conflict with the law:

While the media portray a stereotype of the “new violent girl”, academics argue over how we should study, research, and conceptualize young

female offenders. Concurrently, policy makers and practitioners also struggle to accommodate the increasing number of young females who come into the care of the youth justice system, a system allegedly designed by and for males. In the end, we are left with the media's depiction of the violent girl, academics' concern for the neglected and victimized female youth within a patriarchal system, and the frustration of policy-makers over the lack of detailed and accurate information on young females (p. 2).

### **Young Women in Conflict with the Law**

Canadian young women are less likely than boys to come in conflict with the law. The 1999 Canadian UCR reports indicate that out of all youth charged by the police, 77% were male and 23% were female (Tanner, 2001, p. 183). In addition, only two out of every ten young offenders appearing in court in 1989-1999 were female (Tanner, 2001, p. 183). The types of crimes young women are charged and convicted of also differ from their male counterparts. Young women are less likely to be arrested for crimes of violence or more serious property crimes, such as burglary and robbery (Tanner, 2001, p. 183). Young women are more likely to be arrested for prostitution than young men. In Canada during 1993, 253 girls were arrested for prostitution compared with only 53 boys. Young women are also more likely to be arrested for running away from home compared to young men. The majority of youth who come in conflict with the law do not tend to grow up to become criminal adults, however, young men are more likely to do so than young women (Tanner, 2001, p. 184).

After exploring the gender difference in the type of conflict with the law young

women and men encounter, it is easy to see how male dominated theories deemed young women as sexual deviants. Feminist analysis and theory examines young women's conflict with the law within the context of the unequal social, economic and political situations in which young women find themselves. Feminist theory offers a broader context to investigate and study young women's conflict with the law, thereby providing a pathway to designing better programming to address the needs of young women.

### **Incarcerated Young Women**

There is very limited research exploring young women who are sentenced into custody. Corrado et al. (2000) offer us some insight into young women who end up within our youth correctional facilities. Corrado et al. (2000) indicate that research compiled on young women within correctional institutions "identifies a consistent multi-problem profile of female young offender"(p. 4). This profile indicates notably high rates of physical and sexual abuse, severe drug addiction, increasing high-school drop out rates and low levels of academic and employment achievement along with "chronic family dysfunction and abuse". In addition, a significant number of young women are involved in the sex trade business to support their drug use (Corrado et al., 2000). Kevin Marron (1992) reports that in 1990, 90% of young females incarcerated at the MYC were aboriginal (p. 182). While females have historically been neglected in the literature, cultural issues are still side noted in the academic literature on young female offenders.

Corrado et al. (2000) found that the majority of females are spending time in institutions for administrative charges rather than serious violent crimes. Breaches of Court Orders comprised 44.8% of all charges young women were serving time for, while property offences included 23.8% of the current charges. Only 27% of young women

serving time (approximately 1/4) were incarcerated for a violent offence (p. 5). Corrado et al. (2000) also examined data of offending patterns, which also demonstrated the non-serious nature of the majority of young women's criminal histories (p. 5).

Corrado et al. (2000) also revealed that the reasons that majority of young women were sentenced into custody were related to their individual protection and for treatment, rather than for the protection of society. Not only did the data suggest this, 72% of incarcerated young women also understood the purpose of their incarceration as "safe time" and a chance to "dry out" or "that the judge thinks I am a danger to myself" (p. 7). This theoretically poses some difficulties and injustices as the main purpose of incarceration is to protect society, where it seems the criminal justice system is utilizing incarceration as a mechanism of protection for young women themselves. This is a paternalistic stance, and certainly is in contradiction with the philosophy of the YOA where young people have the "right to the least possible interference with freedom that is consistent to the protection of society" (Pink and Perrier, 1992, p. 131). This also draws light to the scarcity of community based alternatives for these young women. While this is a larger systemic issue and not the focus of this exploration, these broader issues need to be understood in order to develop not only equality under the law for young women, but to develop comprehensive gender and culturally sensitive programming in the appropriate non punitive environments to address the needs of young women.

## **REVIEW OF INTERVENTIONS**

To begin this section, I have included in Appendix A, a list of *Ten Recommendations for Psychologists in Prison* that was written by an incarcerated man. I

again wish to stress the words of wisdom of those behind bars, to further demonstrate they have much to offer and teach us about doing meaningful work behind prison walls. Interventions, helping, healing, clinical work, counselling and therapy are all used interchangeably for the purposes of this report. The approaches reviewed all take the same non-expert stance but use different language to label the approach.

### **Feminist Therapy**

As indicated earlier, there has been very little research on clinical work with incarcerated young women. There is some available literature looking at feminist intervention with adult women. This literature suggests that a feminist approach works best with women who are currently incarcerated (Hannah-Moffat & Shaw 2000; Kendall, 1993). Feminist therapy is concerned with the impact of power and inequality and seeks to bring society into therapy so as to explore women's experiences of sexual inequality and to politicize women's experiences through advocacy (Kendall, 1993). Further, feminist therapy attempts to contextualize crimes within the social, economic and political confluence of their experience. Feminist therapy is grounded in concepts of empowerment and connection and works from the perspective that women are the experts of their own lives. In addition, the therapist is committed to equality within a therapeutic relationship (Kendall, 1993). However, there has been no long term data compiled in North America which assesses the impacts and effectiveness of feminist therapy once women are released to the community (Kendall, 1993, p. 45).

### **Group Work in Correctional Facilities for Women**

In a government document; *Literature Review on Therapeutic Services for Women in Prison* written by Kathleen Kendall (1993), a chapter is devoted to reviewing

the implications of feminist group work within correctional settings. Kendall (1993) confirms that "there is little published material about women's groups in prisons" (p. 44). However, the literature that is available suggests that feminist groups premised on empowerment are the most valuable within correctional institutions for women. Again, Kendall (1993) states that no long term data has been compiled which assesses the impacts of feminist based groups once women are released into the community (p. 45).

Kendall (1993) outlines research on a number of feminist groups that have been used in correctional facilities for women. While the groups address different issues (e.g. anger, physical and sexual abuse) they are all based on a feminist model of group work. The common shared themes of the groups were based on the notions of empowerment, emphasized the importance of creating healing environments where women can share their experiences, and stressed the importance of mutual support and understanding of women's specific needs. Introducing education and /or information was a component of every group wherein participants were encouraged to connect their own experiences to the information, and link shared experiences with group participants. In general, the result of feminist group work in prison indicates an increase in self-esteem, a greater sense of being in control and a rise in trust of others.

Kendall (1993) further explores literature which suggests the limitations correctional environments impose upon group effectiveness. Prison administration and staff often do not support empowerment type groups within correctional facilities and either control or impact the establishment of group cohesiveness essential to group success. This literature also articulates that groups running within correctional facilities are very different from ones running within the community due to the residential nature

of prison accommodations. Kendall (1993) sums up by stating:

much of the literature indicates that for incarcerated women to heal, they must begin to take control of their own lives. Women who participate in groups which are premised upon this assumption may in fact, recognize their strengths, and begin demonstrating self assertion. Traditionally, however, prisons have discouraged women's independence and self-control. Prison policy and practice which stifle or punish women's new-found self-efficacy could create a high degree of frustration and potentially retraumatization (p. 52).

Kendall (1993) certainly identifies a very important aspect of corrections. However, based on my experience working with women in corrections, I would have to argue that prison environments still discourage women's independence. Women and youth are monitored twenty-four hours a day, they are told when they are to sleep, wake up, eat, work and when they have leisure time. How can women feel in control of their lives when the basic functions of their lives are controlled by the institution? Is it possible for women to feel in control of their lives while they are imprisoned? I find the idea of empowerment and creating safe environments just as problematic within correctional facilities. How do we get around these barriers in order that we may do meaningful group work within correctional facilities?

Feminist therapy has not gone without criticism within correctional facilities.

Gillian Balfour (2000) in her article *Feminist Therapy with Women in Prison: Working Under the Hegemony of Correctionalism* conducted ten open-ended interviews with self

identified feminists working with women in conflict with the law. Belfour (2000) states that “feminist therapy has been seriously undermined by the para-military imperatives of prison bureaucracy” (p. 94). Belfour (2000) explains that therapists have acquired the role of experts and have placed incarcerated women in the framework of victims. Belfour (2000) argues that this has subjected women to even additional therapeutic control. Belfour (2000) claims this has endured as the social rights of women have been dislocated from their socio-political context of gender inequalities (p. 94).

Belfour (2000) explains that therapist strategies for working with women are “constrained by an analytical framework that locates women’s behavior and needs in the context of victimization” (p. 98). The focus on victimization is not new to work being done within correctional facilities and has been theoretically described as the victimization-criminalization continuum. This focus has also dominated criminological studies which have attempted to establish a gender-specific theory of crime. Belfour (2000) argues that this vulnerability focus, in theory, adds another dimension of social control onto incarcerated women and completely disregards the class and race realities of women’s lives. Comack (1996) suggests that the way abuse is experienced in a women’s life will be very much conditioned and contoured by other factors related to her structural location in society (p. 121).

It is evident how theory plays out on practice and how easy it is to get caught up in what I call victim consciousness. In addition, when working with youth we need to accommodate feminist intervention for a younger audience. Youth may not have the life experience or the life knowledge of adult women, thusly impacting their abilities to connect their experiences with large structural issues feminism promotes. If we

acknowledge that these young women have truly survived some of life's most brutal constructs of inhumanity, this leads us with a strength based approach to working with young women. Belfour (2000) demonstrates this idea by stating that women's "narratives of resistance that recount particular experiences are rooted in and part of an encompassing cultural, material and political world" (p. 100). Further, Belfour (2000) claims that while therapists need to locate women's stories in their larger socio-political context, women also need resources and supports that consider the extent of their complex life experiences and that are linked with community (p. 101).

### **Research Issues & Feminist Therapy**

Kathleen Kendall (1993) conducted the first and only program evaluation of therapeutic services for women at the Kingston Prison for Women. This report highlighted some very important issues that must be taken into consideration when we are conducting research within correctional institutions. In the Forward of this evaluation Kendall (1993) quoted one woman who agreed to participate in her study:

I'll talk to you, even though all the other times I wasn't heard. And even when I was heard, nothing was done. I have been made invisible all my life. But still, I will talk to you because maybe, just maybe, this time will be different. But, your research needs to be more than different, it has to make a difference. You need to see, hear and know us, not as cons, numbers and statistics but as human beings. Maybe then, it will make a difference. And maybe I won't be invisible anymore (p. i).

A few years after Kendall's (1993) program evaluation had been published she wrote an

essay about her research in the book An Ideal Prison? Critical Essays on Women's Imprisonment in Canada called *Psy-ence Fiction: In venting the Mentally-Distorted Female Prisoner*. Kendall (2000) states the following:

My attempts to acknowledge structural problems such as racism, sexism, classism and violence were ultimately transformed into pathologies lying with individual women prisoners. This occurred as social and political analyses became replaced with psychological ones. For example, my program evaluation had shown that prisoners identified the pains of imprisonment to be not only contrary to therapy and rehabilitation but also the greatest contributing factor to their emotional distress. However, others applying a psychological model used these findings as evidence of women's lack of ability to adjust and cope with prison environment (p. 84).

This demonstrates how more recent efforts of female focused research that has identified the needs of incarcerated women has been misinterpreted or ignored. Kendall's (2000) example should be an eye opener for those of us doing work in prisons, and provoke caution when proceeding with both clinical evaluation and larger research on clinical work with women in prison.

### **Narrative Therapy**

In speaking of stories of resistance in feminist therapy, narrative ideas have plenty to offer intervention when working with incarcerated female youth. Narrative therapy evolved from a postmodern paradigm which assumes that reality is subjective and is

socially constructed through language. Reality is entangled in the stories we tell, the language we use and the social interactions we share. Narrative therapy works on the premise that if reality is represented through language and social interactions, then through the use of language, reality can be changed if a person changes his or her story about a past event. Narrative therapy seeks to discover the gaps in narratives that are less problem saturated. These gaps are then explored and developed into new narratives of the past, present and future (Marvel, Huskey, Lerner, Thurlow, 1997). The purpose is to “lift oppression and emancipate the moral imagination, the visions and hopes, and the life chances of people who are dispossessed” (p. 296).

It is not my intention to review all the techniques employed by narrative therapy, rather, to provide examples of how some of these techniques can be useful when working with incarcerated young women. Narrative is consistent with feminism in that it seeks to “consider the stories that provide the broader socio-political context of the person’s experience (White & Epston, 1990, p. 18). Narrative suggests exposing dominant discourses within therapy, a technique that invites people to see themselves from a broader, more socio-political perspective (Marvel et al., 1997). Utilizing this technique and channeling in feminist principles may be a useful approach when working with young women. It is here too, that an exploration of crime can be contextualized within a social, economic and political perspective/understanding.

Exposing dominant discourses is also an avenue to externalize the problem and “its associated narrative by uncovering the influences of broader, largely transparent societal factors” (Marvel et al., 1997, p.7). Externalizing the problems people experience is a well known technique to narrative therapy. Mishka Lysack (1996) is a therapist who

works within a detention centre in Ottawa with young women and men. In his contribution to the book *Beyond the Prison: Gathering Dreams of Freedom* he describes how he externalizes problems with young men and women in prison. The first step is inviting people to step out of seeing themselves as “wholly criminal, bad or as a young offender”, identities that are encouraged by prison culture (p. 132). Lysack (1996), like Kendall (2000), also comments on the inherent constraints psychology has placed on those in prison by defining people’s “problems” as internal and as something that is intrinsic to their character.

Through externalizing problems, people are invited to identify the problems they experience and wish to explore. Lysack (1996) tries to assist young men and women to identify what they want in their lives, and to provide a path for people to reconnect themselves with their own knowledge and strengths (p. 132). Once individuals are able to separate their identity from the problem, histories of resistance to the problem can be explored. It is here that alternative/preferred stories can develop and grow.

Lysack (1996) highlights the usefulness of externalizing conversation, which presents ways of talking about problems that is separate from people’s identities. Further, this encourages ways of working with people that challenges the foundations of imprisonment, as they are invited to work with people against the problem, rather than punishing individuals. Lysack (1996) also addressed the issue of taking responsibility. Lysack (1996) states:

These ways of working do not deny responsibility for the actions that many have carried out under the influence of crime or drugs, but invites the young man or women to take responsibility in circumstances where

that it is appropriate-especially in relation to crimes of violence...if you are the problem, or see yourself as the problem, then there's not much you can do about it-except maybe act against yourself. Creating space to take action against the problem, including taking responsibility for its effects on others, offers possibilities of collaboration (p.135).

Taking responsibility for actions is a very important issue that feminist therapy has not addressed. I suspect the feminist reasoning behind this is more political in nature. As indicated earlier, women's crime is very well linked to the social, economic and political situations women find themselves in. Underpinning this stance perpetuates victimhood, where as Lysack's (1996) approach invites responsibility where appropriate and frames it in the context external to the person's character. Lysack (1996) also provides a beautiful framework for getting around para-military settings and offers a solution to the victimization-criminalization continuum through externalization.

Lysack (1996) does not stop at externalizing problems, he also builds on the concept and has developed a way to create communities of concern within prison, another technique of narrative therapy. Often people wish for such discussions to be recorded into a document as a testimony to their commitment to externalizing their problems and taking responsibility for their lives. Others may choose to make a public announcement resigning from their problem saturated stories. Lysack (1996) recognizes the importance of bearing witness to, and extends on this aspect by creating groups of people to bear witness to people's preferred stories, enhancing the strengths of individuals.

At the Ottawa Detention Centre, permission, if given by the institution, allows

family members and peers to come into the prison to take part in this process. In this process the individual is invited to reflect on the areas of her/his lives in which she/he has resisted the problem and to step fully into these new stories about her/selves. Families and peers bear witness to this process and are able to comment and support individuals beginning to live out their preferred ways of being. In addition, Lysack (1996) creates consulting teams which consist of participants, parents, peers and co-workers, allowing him to reflect and evaluate the work he is doing within the correctional facility. What is notably interesting is the feedback given by individuals who participated in Lysack's (1996) group counselling and peer/family counselling. They commented that they found:

The meetings with family and friends to be more empowering and helpful in constructing long-term and more durable changes in their lives.

Expressing their strong preference for family/peer counselling, they advised me to de-emphasize group work in favor of working with their family and friends, a direction I have pursued ever since (p.141).

In this case it seems that the process of involving family and peers into the counselling equation proved to be more favorable than the individual and group work. Separation from family and friends is devastating for people who are incarcerated and may be why this approach is more agreeable. This process creates strong links and support systems within the community which makes the transition from prison to community easier as the individual has developed and maintained these connections while incarcerated. This type of approach which incorporates community supports other than "professionals" is desperately needed for young women. However, the geographic displacement of institutions sometimes brings young women hundreds of miles away from their homes.

This makes it very difficult for family and friends to visit. Unfortunately, whether or not this approach would be feasible for women would depend on where they are from. In addition, corrections tend to focus programming on a cognitive behavioral model. To switch the preferred model of interventions within corrections would be difficult.

### **Overview of “What Works” Literature**

Correctional facilities in the Western world are now 200 years old and their purposes have swayed with the pendulum swing between “punishment” and “rehabilitation”. In saying this, we are currently encountering a time in what is being referred to as the ‘What Works’ era. In James McGuire’s (2001) article *Reviewing ‘What Works’: Past, Present and Future* he states that: “it has now become ever more apparent over the recent decades, that punitive measures have done little to arrest the increase in crime” (p .4). McGuire (2001) explains that the question is not simply whether or not punishment works in terms of reoffending but also must include exploring the effectiveness of any type of intervention (p. 4). The ‘What Works’ era was a direct response to the popular Martinson Report (1974) which claimed that ‘nothing works’ with offenders (McGuire, 2001). While there is still much debate around this issue despite a growing collection of evidence that indicates otherwise, many in the criminal justice field still believe that intervention does not reduce reoffending (McGuire, 2001). The basic foundation of ‘what works’ is the utilization of an evidence-based model, this model explores effective ways to deal with offenders and to develop appropriate programs to address the needs of those who come in conflict with the law.

McGuire indicates that there is a need for more research within the ‘what works’ platform. However, the literature that does exist offers 6 principles for more effective

programs. The first three principles are considered to be the three pillars of effective correctional programming. First is risk classification, which is a fairly standardized way to determine the offender risk level and the degree of service intervention; this means the higher the offender risk level the more intensive the intervention should be. Second is identifying criminogenic needs. This principle suggests that if we are able to correctly identify the needs of offenders we can offer the appropriate programs that target the criminogenic needs of offenders. Third is the responsivity principle, which identifies that people have different learning styles (both client and worker). Responsivity suggests that programs work best when there is systematic matching between styles of workers and clients. The fourth principle recognizes that programs based within the community produce the most effective outcomes. Evidence suggests that it is within the community that individuals are able to experience real-life learning. The fifth principle relates to treatment modality. Treatment modality suggests that the most effective programs are multimodal which recognises that offenders experience a variety of problems that need to be addressed. In addition, multimodal approaches adopt skills-oriented interventions such as problem-solving, social interaction and coping skills. The finale principle is program integrity. Program integrity affirms that effective programs should have clear objectives which flow into methods being used. Program integrity describes a clear plan and a systematic approach for program monitoring and evaluation (McGuire, 2001).

McGuire (2001) again identifies that “it is likely to be some time before this field is sufficiently developed for any detailed lessons to be drawn concerning practice” (p. 21). However, McGuire (2001) does discuss implications for practice that have arisen thus far. McGuire (2001) suggests that if practice is to incorporate ‘what works’

principles it should be evident in the application that makes it visible to the outside observer. Second, McGuire (2001) suggests that clear program structure is an important element to effective programming. Therefore, implementation, monitoring and evaluation should be conducted consistently. Third, evidence suggests that program integrity is an important component of effective programming and therefore, workers need to relate to clients “in a manner that combines sensitivity and constructiveness” (McGuire, 2001 p. 22). Lastly, McGuire (2001) indicates that much of the research suggests that many programs are never evaluated at all. As a result, information is lost which could be valuable to staff, managers and researchers in the ongoing endeavour of developing effective programming.

#### **‘What Works’ & Gender Issues**

Andrews and Dowden (1999) in their article *A Meta-Analytic Investigation into Effective Correctional Intervention for Female Offenders* indicate that there has been some debate over the classification principles of risk, need and general responsivity by advocates of female-specific treatment (p.18). Andrews and Dowden (1999) conducted a meta-analytic investigation to explore “whether adherence to the principles of human service, risk, need, general responsivity, program integrity and core correctional practice were important considerations for female offenders” (p.18). Andrews and Dowden (1999) found a reduction in re-offending rates of female offenders when human services were delivered to high risk cases, when services targeted criminogenic needs, and when structured learning and cognitive-behavioural approaches were applied. Andrews and Dowden (1999) also found mild increases in re-offending when inappropriate treatment was delivered to lower risk female offenders. Inappropriate treatment was determined

when programming did not match the criminogenic needs of women. Andrews and Dowden (1999) concluded that principles of case classification, integrity and core correctional practice are highly relevant to program design and delivery with female offenders. Andrews and Dowden (1999) also noted that additional research is required in this area. While this study indicates that effective practice is relevant to programming for female offenders, meta-analysis does not take a critical look at gender differences and whether or not core correctional practice is gender sensitive. Further, this article fails to examine if risk assessments and criminogenic needs consider differences of the female offender populations.

Kelly Blanchette (1997) in her article *Classifying Female Offenders for Correctional Interventions* starts to explore some of the possible issues related to risk assessment and classification for female offenders. Blanchette (1997) indicates that most assessment instruments used on federal female offenders were original designed for men but have been revised for women. Blanchette (1997) claims that these instruments are consistently and reliably used with female offenders (p. 28). Blanchette (1997) does suggest that there is at least one static risk factor, that being a history of self-injury and or attempts at suicide, that should be considered a criminogenic need for women. Blanchette (1997) states that: "it is feasible that current or future self-destructive behaviour enhances prediction for recidivism, and that these reflect dynamic needs" (p. 29). Another element Blanchette (1997) notes with most risk assessments is that they fail to consider full time child rearing as significant employment.

Margret Shaw and Kelly Hannah-Moffat (2001) in their research study *Taking Risks: Incorporating Gender and Culture into the Classification and Assessment of*

*Federally Sentenced Women in Canada* take a much closer and critical look at not only gender but cultural issues. Shaw and Hannah-Moffat (2001) take a different view than Blanchette (1997), stating; “there is growing evidence that risk is gendered and racialised, and this cannot be accounted for by adding on to existing male-derived scoring systems” (p. 3). Shaw and Hannah-Moffat (2001) argue that risk-based classification systems have only focussed on male populations, which use actuarial scales developed from prediction studies of large male populations. Shaw and Hannah-Moffat (2001) note that rarely have risk-based classification systems considered their implications for female and cultural diverse populations (p. 4). Shaw and Hannah-Moffat (2001) recommend that good predictive classification schemes require large and representative populations. This is not possible with the small number of women involved in the federal correctional system. Shaw and Hannah-Moffat (2001) suggest that a better approach to classification schemes is that a model be developed based on the diverse needs of female offenders in Canada.

Barbra Bloom (1999) in her article *Gender-Responsivity Programming for Women Offenders: Guiding Principles and Practices* offers the following guiding principles for gender responsive programs:

- Equality does not mean sameness; equality of service does not mean giving women access to services traditionally reserved for men. Equality must be defined as providing opportunities that are relevant to each gender. Thus, services and interventions may appear different depending on to whom they are being delivered;
- Gender-responsive programs are not simply “women only” programs that were

designed for men;

- Females' sense of self is manifested and develops differently in female-specific groups as opposed to co-ed groups;
- the unique needs and issues of women and girls should be addressed in a woman-focussed environment that is safe, trusting and supportive;
- Whenever possible, women and girls should be treated in the least restrictive programming environment available. The level of security should depend on both treatment needs and concerns for the public;
- Cultural awareness and sensitivity should be promoted, and the cultural resources and strengths in various communities should be utilized (p. 23).

Bloom (1999) also suggests that gender-specific programming should incorporate empowerment models, stress safety and work on the understanding that women learn best in connection.

It is apparent that all authors have reached consensus on the need for more research to fully understand the implications current correctional practices may have on the smaller diverse populations within the criminal justice system. What is interesting to note, is that none of the authors reviewed argue that the 'what works' principles are not a useful approach to correctional practice. Shaw and Hannah-Moffat (2001) raise important questions regarding current correctional practices that move beyond gender and include the diversity reflected within Canada's population. Identifying cultural issues is very important not only for correctional practices but for programming. Research is the first process in exploring these issues, it is hopeful that as research emerges it will influence correctional practices to ensure that approaches employed are both gender and

cultural sensitive.

### **Summary**

Feminism and post modernism has a lot to offer in inspiring meaningful work with young women in prison. Unfortunately, the minimal research dedicated in this area focuses more on larger policy issues and theories on crime, then the micro interventions. I suspect it will be some time until we see research generating from clinical work. While I have not discussed the scope of research issues for this population, there are many and they are quite complex. The complexity stems from how we view those who are incarcerated and what our beliefs are on the purpose of prison and punishment. It must be acknowledged that I did not discuss other programming that is equally as important as counselling and other interventions for young women. Programming needs to be comprehensive; education-employment training, meaningful work related programs, health programs and links with community organizations. When conducting work in prison we must constantly be searching for alternative ways to deal with society's very complex social issues. Alternatives will hopefully lead us into a direction of positive solutions, an avenue that promotes humanitarian values and does not unjustly incarcerate young women for their own protection.

The literature provided insight and guidance to this practicum report. The literature review addressed the many areas that impact interventions to incarcerated young women. The legal philosophy that allows the Criminal Justice System to incarcerate young women suggests that rehabilitation is best served by addressing the needs and circumstances of youth. The academic literature reviewed revealed how theories of crime and interventions have traditionally focused on men and boys. The more

recent investigations into what brings young women into conflict with the law, suggest the pathways to crime and types of crime young women commit are quite different compared to that of young men. This has resulted in the development of feminist literature and interventions that highlight the different needs of incarcerated young women and the lack of programming to address these needs. The 'what works' literature promotes evidenced-based intervention. In order for programming to be effective it must be developed based on the criminogenic needs of young women. It is hopeful that during the current era of 'What Works' we will find more female specific research at the intervention level. This practicum explored these issues on a practise level. The feminist literature was used as a road map in developing the learning objectives. Exploring how we would know if we were incorporating the principles of gender responsivity into practice was the main focus of the practicum.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PRACTICUM DESCRIPTION

#### *Setting*

The MYC is a youth correctional institution that is operated by Manitoba Justice. The goals and mission of MYC are consistent with the earlier reviewed philosophy of the YOA. The MYC provides care, custody and a variety of programs for young people between 12-17 years of age who are charged with an offence and/or sentenced to a term of custody under the Young Offenders Act. A young person may have a pre-trial detention or be sentenced to either open or secure custody. The MYC provides accommodations for all three of these sanctions.

A pre-trial detention means that a young person has been charged under the YOA and is being held in remand at the MYC until bail is granted, or until the court deals with her/his charges. While in remand, the young person can participate daily in a variety of programs at the centre, but has no access to the community.

An open custody sentence is a judicial sentence that enables a young offender to remain in the community but she must live in a residence designated by the Province. The youth may continue to go to school, work or engage in recreation or treatment programs with continuous supervision from the Open Custody provider.

Young people sentenced to terms of Secure Custody have severely limited access to the community. They are expected to participate in a rigorous and highly structured regimen, which includes academic and treatment programs. Male offenders serve their term at the MYC or Agassiz Youth Centre in Portage la Prairie. Female offenders serve their term at the MYC.

The MYC has 10 cottages divided into three centres. Each cottage contains 15 bedrooms, a school classroom, a laundry room and a bathroom. Group programs are currently being delivered in the school classroom. Each cottage shares a common area with the adjoining cottage. The MYC provides basic necessities including toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs, shampoo and soap. Wake up time is between 6:00 am and 7:30 a.m. Clean-up duties are assigned to residents daily. Bedroom lights are to be out between 9:30 and 10:30 p.m. Residents in the cottages prepare breakfast and an evening snack. Noon and evening meals are served in the cafeteria. Requests for special diets are coordinated through the medical unit.

Each cottage is staffed on a 24 hours basis with trained youth counsellors. Qualified teachers are available during normal school hours. Staff is under the direction of a cottage supervisor. The supervisor is responsible for communication and collaboration with Probation Services, Child and Family Services, parents, guardians, lawyers, etc. Medical services are provided 24 hours a day by registered nurses. A nurse completes a medical assessment of each young person upon admission. Nursing staff arrange appointments with the community medical centres and refer residents to pediatricians who visit the MYC on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The services of a clinical psychologist and psychiatrist are available to residents who need emergency psychiatric treatment.

### ***Overview of Clients and Personnel***

This practicum focussed on group programs delivered to young females at the MYC. These females have been remanded or sentenced to open or secure custody. Individuals who have been sentenced are required to participate in group programming as

determined by the institution. Individuals who have been remanded have an option of participating in group programming. A number of standardized risk assessment tools that were developed by Manitoba Justice are administered to all youth by staff members once they are admitted into custody. These tools consist of both security assessments and a number of risk assessments. The results of these assessments provide guidance in determining which participants are likely to benefit from group interventions.

On average there are approximately twenty-five young women at the MYC at a given time; they are in remand or serving a sentence of either open or secure custody. The age of the participants varies, but again the age range is between 12 and 17 years of age. The Aboriginal Justice Commission (2001) reports that in 1998-1999, 75% of youth sentenced to custody were aboriginal. Given that aboriginal youth make up 16% of the youth population, clearly aboriginal youth are vastly over represented within our youth correctional facilities (p. 42).

MYC has a number of core group programs they are mandated to run by Manitoba Justice. Anger management and victim awareness are two such programs. Group programs at the MYC are delivered within a model that incorporates therapeutic interventions. Interventions within the group programs tend to incorporate a cognitive behavioural approach. Facilitators of these groups are not allowed to change any of the concepts of the core programs. However, they are allowed to add to the program and may utilize different delivery approaches. In addition to core group programs, the program coordinators, in collaboration with the workers/facilitators, are able to deliver other types of group programming based on the needs of the female residents. There is no set schedule for which programs are to run, rather, programs are chosen based on the

needs of the young women who are currently residing at the MYC.

Group programs for young women vary in length but tend to run between 5-10 weeks, running either daily or three times a week between 9:00 am-11:00am. The MYC incorporates a level system. Residents are given daily points, which are averaged over the week. The averages of daily points indicate an achieved level, the higher a level the resident achieves the more privileges she receives. Programs are mandatory and the behaviour of young women are tracked daily by the facilitators within the level system of the MYC. Overall, facilitators use their discretion on how to evaluate the group intervention including group process and clinical outcomes. Some programs offer internal tools of assessing the program. One task of this practicum was to try and integrate internal tools with newly developed ones.

## **CENTRAL THEME OF THE PACTICUM**

### ***Introduction***

The focus of the practicum was to explore gender issues and programming for female youth. All the programs delivered at the MYC with the exception of the Moving On program were originally developed for young men. The lack of gender specific programming is consistent with the literature review which specifies that the current programming within corrections is based on the assumption that the needs and targets for intervention are the same across genders. The lack of gender specific programming is a critical issue, however, this is a larger structural issue and was not the focus of this practicum. The Moving On program was developed in response to this problem and is the only program that is currently being run in Manitoba that was designed exclusively for females. The youth version of the Moving On program was not ready during my

practicum at the MYC. I did have an opportunity to co-facilitate the adult Moving On program which enhanced the learning experiences of this practicum as it provided an opportunity to compare programming specifically designed for females with other programs that were originally developed for men and boys. MYC piloted the Moving On program and found difficulties with the 'what works' principal of responsivity, as the program incorporated learning styles appropriate for adult women rather than youth. I will discuss later in this chapter how we dealt with this concern and explain how we modified the program to accommodate youth learning styles. The Moving On program is of particular interest as this program used the 'what works' agenda as a road map and was specifically designed for adult women.

As highlighted in the literature review, a feminist approach to intervention is recommended with females who are currently incarcerated. Despite the lack of female specific programming, I believe it is essential that at a minimum we attempt to incorporate a female specific approach in delivering programming to young women. In saying this, filtering feminist principles into programs developed to meet the needs of men is not a productive solution to the problem of the lack of appropriate women centred programming in Canada. Amending programs, adding women centred education and delivery models is problematic as it merely offers a band-aid solution to this problem. Addressing the larger structural issue as to why female centred programs based on the needs of women are not being funded, would prove to be a more fruitful endeavour of addressing the cause of this problem. However, practitioners need to find creative ways to address the many barriers that arise in daily practice. It is hoped that advocates of female specific programming will continue to address the larger structural issues that

impact both women and youth within our correctional system.

The central theme running throughout this practicum is exploring the feminist principles outlined in Bloom's (1999) article (empowerment, safety and connection) and to examine whether or not these principles can be achieved in delivery approaches to programming within a correctional institution. Barbara Bloom (1999) suggests that gender-specific programming should incorporate empowerment models, stress safety and work on the understanding that women learn best in connection. These three principles relate to the responsivity principal of the 'what works' literature. Responsivity is one of the three pillars to effective correctional program intervention. Investigating responsivity and examining how we can work towards gender responsivity within programs delivered to young women presents as a worthwhile task. The two central questions explored during this practicum were:

- 1) Is a process of safety, empowerment and connection possible within a correctional setting?
- 2) How do we know if we are achieving this/moving towards this?

The purpose of examining these questions was strictly for the purpose of evaluating clinical skills and methods employed in the delivery of group programs. The purpose of formulating the practicum in this manner was to use the 'what works' literature as a pathway to identify and evaluate skills and delivery techniques to programming objectives for youth. Therefore, the method used is not for research, rather to develop ways of incorporating clinical evaluation to meet the objectives I have identified in this practicum.

## **Definition of Concepts: Empowerment, Safety and Connection**

According to Bloom (1999) safety requires the program environment to be free from physical, emotional and sexual harassment. Bloom (1999) recognises it is impossible for facilitators to guarantee safety of the institution, however, the environment within the group itself should be a safe place. Bloom (1999) defines the concept of connection as the mutual exchanges among facilitator and group members, which should be reciprocal rather than one way and authoritarian. The idea of connection works on the understanding that for females to heal, their painful experiences need to be understood by the facilitators. Lastly, Bloom (1999) suggests that facilitators should incorporate an empowerment model. An empowerment model demonstrates how women can use power with, rather than using power over others or being powerless. An empowerment model also “sets firm, respectful, and empathic limits to encourage group members to use and believe in their abilities” (Bloom 1999, p. 24). Toseland and Rivas (1998) in their book *Group Work Practice* further expand the ideas of empowerment within groups. Toseland and Rivas (1998) explain that group intervention itself can assist in empowering members by raising their cultural consciousness and by developing mutual aid within the group (p. 139). Personal and interpersonal power can be promoted by constructive dialogue among all members of the group. Facilitators can assist group members attain a sense of personal power and self-worth by reinforcing positive feelings about their identity (Tosland & Rivas, 1998, p. 139). Tosland and Rivas (1998) also suggest the ultimate goal of the group process is to empower members so they can take control over their lives both inside and outside of the group (p. 244).

### **Limitations on Concepts: Empowerment, Safety and Connection**

The idea of empowerment, safety and connection within correctional facilities is an inherent contradiction. Correctional institutions are punitive measures for punishing unlawful behaviour. Whether the correctional system takes a rehabilitative or punishment approach, incorporating empowerment ideology remains precarious. The criminal justice system labels individuals as “criminals”, defeating any promotion of positive feelings about individuals’ identity and self worth. A sentence to a correctional facility restricts an individual’s most basic freedoms. As reflected in the literature review, correctional environments place enormous barriers on young women trying to achieve control over their lives when the basic functions of daily living are controlled and monitored by the institution. Therefore, logic would suggest that empowerment within correctional institutions cannot be achieved. Nonetheless, individuals still have a choice in how they choose to think about themselves and how they behave within a correctional setting. While it may be logical to suggest that full empowerment is not achievable in jail, the question posed throughout this practicum is: can young women start a *process* of empowerment within the institution? Exploring how we would know if this process of empowerment has started is the endeavour I explored.

The concept of connection also has limitations within jail. Facilitators are employees of the institution and must follow the rules and regulations. Regardless of their approach facilitators thereby represent authority, which includes power over participants of the group. Facilitators are also required to contribute to the level system devised by the institution, contributing to the overall daily points of the client based on her participation, effort and behaviour within the group program. The higher the level an

individual achieves, additional privileges are granted. Facilitators are an extension of the institution and behaviour reflected in the program could potentially have a punitive impact for individuals.

Bloom (1999) acknowledges the limitations on the concept of safety within correctional facilities. While facilitators have no control over safety within the institution they do have control over safety within the group. These concepts will be operationally defined later, in order to develop a measurement plan to meet the learning objectives of this practicum.

### ***Program Delivery and Implementation***

The nature of the setting, the number of different programs being delivered and no set schedule of when the programs are run posed some barriers in trying to plan for the practicum and develop methods for clinical evaluation. In developing the proposal for this practicum I did not know which programs I would have the opportunity to co-facilitate. Focussing on gender specific responsivity was a way to focus this practicum and develop methods of clinical evaluation that would be gender specific and generic enough that they could be applied across the various programs. McGuire (2001) suggests that there is still much research needed within the 'what works' platform before any detailed lessons can be drawn concerning practice (p. 22). While this practicum did not focus on the larger research issues, attempts were made to explore practice issues and ways that clinical evaluation might attempt to capture the responsivity principle, and possibly contribute to larger research undertakings. The focus on practice issues can also contribute to knowledge that can be applied to larger research ventures.

I designed the practicum in a manner that was flexible enough to fit into any of

the programs offered by the institution. This flexible design in itself is valuable, as practitioners we often may not know what type of programming we are running in advance, as is the case at MYC. Delivering a variety of programs expanded my knowledge of the many specific issues youth are faced with. In addition, it provided an opportunity to compare programming with different theoretical perspectives. All programs were delivered in a group format that provided an opportunity to develop skills for group work with incarcerated youth across a number of topic areas.

## CHAPTER 3

### OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS DELIVERED

#### *Duration of Practicum*

This practicum took place at the MYC from August 14, 2002 through to February 28, 2003. I participated in co-facilitating four different programs. The first program was a three week Victim Sensitivity Program. This program was used as a test run on instruments, tools and the process of this practicum. This provided an opportunity to examine the practicum process and make the appropriate changes where necessary. The three main programs I co-delivered at the MYC were the Moving On program, Youth Substance Abuse Management and Youth Violence Intervention. The following is a description of the three main programs delivered at the MYC and an explanation on the delivery of each program.

#### *The Moving On Program*

Of all four programs delivered, the Moving On program was the most intense and detailed. The Moving On program is a 26 session curriculum-based program that was developed exclusively for women offenders by a group of practitioners from Canada and the United States. The Moving On program acknowledges that women face different challenges than men and require “unique services, delivered in a different way, under different circumstances” (*Facilitators Guide*). The Moving On program is based on an understanding of the situational, contextual and personal factors that bring women in conflict with the criminal justice system. This was the only program delivered at the MYC that was exclusively designed for women. The “what works” literature was used as a road map in developing this program. The primary goal of the program is to provide

women with alternatives and choices free from criminal activity by assisting them in identifying and mobilizing both personal and community resources (*Facilitators Guide*).

Research has identified that women in conflict within the criminal justice system are faced with the following: economic difficulties, lack of stable housing, low levels of education and vocational achievement, limited employment history, poor physical health, mental health issues, substance misuse, early victimization including physical and sexual abuse, unhealthy relationships characterised by abuse and difficulties with communication, interpersonal relationships and problem solving skills (*Facilitators Guide*). These issues are consistent with the literature reviewed for this report.

While women's needs may be similar to men, the literature about women in conflict with the law suggests that the process of pathways that bring women in conflict with the criminal justice system are dramatically different from men. The Moving On program has incorporated Daly's (1992) model in understanding the process or pathways that lead women into the criminal justice system. Daly's (1992) model describes five pathways to crime:

- 1) Street woman: Severely abused as a child, lives on the street, ends up in corrections supporting a drug habit through selling drugs, prostitution and stealing.
- 2) Harmed and harming woman: Abused, responded with anger and "acting out". Alcohol and drugs exacerbate the anger and violence.
- 3) Battered Woman: Ended relationship with a violent man, crime harming or killing him (no previous criminal record).
- 4) Drug-connected crime: Uses or sells as a result of relationship with boyfriend, child, mother. A recent criminal record.
- 5) Other: Economically motivated, stemming from greed or poverty (*Facilitators Guide*).

Daly's (1992) model provides an understanding of, and outlines the assumptions that the program has about women and youth's conflict with the law and the causes of such crime.

### ***Models and Approaches Used***

The Moving On program utilizes a number of methods and strategies from the following approaches: cognitive-behavioural intervention, solution focussed intervention and motivational enhancement. Cognitive- behavioural intervention identifies the importance of emotions, behaviour, and the environment. The distinguishing feature is its concentration on the client's beliefs, attitudes, and cognition. In the development of the Moving On program there were a number of concerns about the appropriateness of cognitive behavioural intervention with women. The following concerns were noted: that an emphasis on attitudes, values and beliefs could serve to dampen or suppress emotional expression, confrontational styles utilised by some cognitive specialists and the structural approach adopted by many cognitive-behavioural programs may serve to encourage dependence on others and devalue instrumental competence (*Facilitators Guide*).

The Moving On program includes cognitive-behavioural intervention, as the literature suggests that women do benefit from cognitive behavioural programs. To address concerns, the Moving On program incorporated feminist principles into the cognitive- behavioural approach. Two feminist principals are in place to guide the cognitive-behavioural intervention of this program. First, equality is essential between the practitioner and the client. Facilitators are to take a collaborative role rather than an expert role. This approach encourages participants to ask questions, identify their own problems and set their own goals. Second, the personal is political, this principle requires

the facilitator to understand and identify the broader social and political systems wherein both client and facilitator must operate. This includes the idea that if we overemphasize the power of the mind (cognition) there is a risk of ignoring the very real conditions of peoples lives (*Facilitators guide*).

Solution focused intervention “is a way of thinking about how people change and reach their goals, a way of conversing with clients, and a way of constructing solutions interactively” (Walter & Peller, 1992). Interestingly enough, solution focussed therapy comes from the same philosophical underpinning as narrative therapy, that of post modernism. The solution-focused model is based on the following assumptions:

- 1) Focussing on the positive, the solution, and on the future, facilitates change in the desired direction.
  - 2) Expectations to every problem can be created by the facilitator and client which can be used to build solutions
  - 3) Nothing is always the same and therefore change is occurring all the time.
  - 4) Small change is generative and leads to larger change.
  - 5) Cooperation is inevitable if the facilitator believes that clients are always cooperating. Clients show us how they think and thus we understand their thinking and act accordingly.
  - 6) Everyone has the ability to change to a different course of action. People are capable of solving their own problems.
  - 7) Intervention is a goal-or solution-focussed endeavour, with the client as the expert.
- (*Facilitators Guide*)

The Moving On program has incorporated a treatment modality consistent with the ‘what works’ literature. The Moving On program recognises the multiple difficulties female offenders are faced with, and has incorporated content and methods that are skills-oriented and has utilised methods of cognitive-behavioural intervention.

### ***Program Goals and Objectives***

The Moving On program deals with a series of topics that move from a broader understanding of what influences behaviour (culture, society, family, relationships) to the

personal, where women are introduced to self-change strategies. Specifically, this program is designed to assist women with reintegration into the community. The following are the specific objectives of the Moving On program:

1. Enhance motivation and commitment to the change process;
2. Provide women with information that will increase their understanding of the contextual, situation and personal factors that contribute to criminal behaviour;
3. Invite women to identify and build upon person strengths and competencies;
4. Optimize social and instrumental functioning by providing women with a number of adaptive skills including:
  - Increasing awareness of emotions and the benefits of experiencing a full-range of emotions
  - Building confidence in coping with emotions when unpleasant
  - Identifying and changing harmful self-talk
  - Problem solving skills
  - Assertiveness skills
  - Deep relaxation skills and stress management;
5. Provide women with the opportunity to identify, secure and mobilize a range of resources that are needed to live, play and work in a healthy way in the community;
6. Encourage women to develop healthy relationships and connections within and outside of the program;
7. Encourage and support women with access to community activities, supports and connections that will increase social networks and reduce stress; and
8. Assist women to identify and deal more effectively with new challenges and high risk situations that can lead to problems with the criminal justice system and interfere with personal goal attainment.

***Program Description***

The Moving On program consists of the following nine different modules:

- Module 1: Setting the Context for Change
- Module 2: Women in Society
- Module 3: Taking Care of Yourself
- Module 4: Family Messages
- Module 5: Relationships
- Module 6: Coping with Emotions and Harmful Self Talk

Module 7: Problem Solving  
Module 8: Becoming Assertive  
Module 9: Moving On

In addition to the modules, the Moving On program includes four program themes and topics that run throughout. The first theme encourages personal responsibility and works towards enhancing motivation for change. The Moving On program is highly structured and organized in a way that is designed to heighten self-awareness, and builds on existing strengths and teaches new skills. This program also stresses the importance of the personal goals of each participant. An important element of this program is that participant's goals are updated and reviewed throughout. The second theme attempts to expand connections and build healthy relationships. This is done by adopting a number of methods to assist women to address past trauma and to develop healthy relationships. The third theme reviews self awareness skills which attempt to explore feelings, thoughts and behaviours and looks at the connections between them. Lastly, skills enhancement, development and maintenance focus on the following: decision making skills, setting personal goals and developing action plans, coping with intense emotions, identifying and changing harmful self talk, problem solving skills, including critical reasoning, communication skills, stress management skills and coping with unpleasant emotions, including anger (*Facilitators Guide*).

### ***Moving On Program Delivery***

The youth version of Moving On had yet to be completed at the time of this practicum. The co-facilitator (Shirley Mexiner) and I decided to modify the Moving On program to make it more youth friendly (we had the opportunity to spend one week preparing for this group). We did not anticipate that we would be able to complete a full

Moving On session with the youth, as one Moving On session took us two sessions to complete with the youth. The program ran September 16, 2002 - November 1, 2002, Monday to Friday 9am-11:00. In total we ran 28 sessions, due to time constraints we did not complete the last three modules of the program (Problem Solving, Becoming Assertive and Moving On). In terms of modifying the program, we did not change any of the core concepts, rather we attempted to simplify the concepts to assist in making the program more youth friendly. This consisted of breaking down the concepts so that youth could understand the ideas and strategies we were teaching them.

An important element of the Moving On program is linking women with community resources. We established a resource board as recommended by the program, but also brought in a number of different speakers to discuss resources within the community. In addition, aboriginal speakers who work in community agencies were invited to discuss a number of issues related to topics within the program. The young women all enjoyed these presentations and a few of them contacted the community resources to make plans for their future. This provided the youth with an opportunity to work on making plans for their futures and to establish connections within the community while at the MYC.

### ***Youth Substance Abuse Management Program***

The Youth Substance Management Program (YSAM) was being piloted at the MYC. YSAM was developed by The Government of British Columbia Ministry for Children and Families and was based on the 'what works' literature. The overall goal of this treatment readiness course is for the facilitator to enhance the client's motivation for change (*Facilitator Overview*, p.2). Motivation has been defined as the "probability that

a person will enter into, continue, and adhere to a specific change strategy” (*Facilitator Overview, p.2*). There are 8 motivation strategies that comprise the foundation of

YSAM:

- Removing Barriers
- Giving Advice
- Providing Choice
- Decreasing Desirability
- Practising Empathy
- Providing Feedback
- Clarifying Goals
- Active Helping

The most important goal identified in this program is building relationships with the clients. This program works on the idea that in order for young people to change they must experience trust, rapport and have guidance regarding making changes in their life.

This concept is similar to Bloom’s (1999) connection principle.

At the end of the program participants should have:

- A sense of connection to the facilitator and the group
- Experience “being heard” and expressing their opinions
- Motivation to continue treatment, whether in a group setting or one-on one
- An increased desire to alter their substance use and a decreased desire to continue with their present lifestyle
- Knowledge of dependency and the stages of drug and alcohol use
- Knowledge of interests or activities that create flow and help reduce or manage stress
- Basic communication skills
- An awareness of their personal boundaries
- Understanding the costs and benefits of using versus the costs and benefits of changing
- Understanding how using has affected themselves and others
- Knowledge of basic relaxation techniques
- Awareness of harm reduction strategies
- Clarification of their goals regarding level of use
- Knowledge of their triggers and cravings and skills to manage them
- Personal experience with the change process

YSAM consists of three separate modules with five sessions within each module. It is expected that each session takes approximately one and a half hours. YSAM is a comprehensive, experiential, cognitive skills program which includes the following topics; Behaviours, Triggers, Payoffs, Consequences, Beliefs and Attitudes about Substance Abuse, Boundaries, Communication Skills, Managing Triggers and Cravings and Goal Setting.

YSAM is also based on a Harm Reduction Model. Harm reduction is a term used to describe a range of information and practices aimed at decreasing the negative health and social consequences of alcohol and drug use for individuals, communities and society as a whole (*Facilitator Overview, p.10*). Harm reduction does not assume or require abstinence on the part of the client, it acknowledges that some individuals will engage in substance misuse and high risk activities no matter what the consequences. Harm Reduction has been adopted as the National Drug Strategy in Canada.

### ***Delivery of YSAM***

The YSAM program commenced on November 15, 2002, and ran until December 13, 2002. In total we ran 18 sessions. We did not have the same opportunity to spend a week preparing for this program. However, this program was designed for youth and was user friendly. This program was designed for medium risk youth and the focus on the program is to enhance the client's motivation for change. The program was not meeting the needs of the youth because most participants were high risk drug and alcohol users and were constantly requesting more information on drugs and alcohol. Therefore, we added additional information to try and meet the needs of these young women. In addition, we wanted to include gender specific information as it relates to women's drug

and alcohol use. We also used a number of videos in this program that demonstrated the long term effects of drug and alcohol use.

### ***Youth Violence Intervention Program***

Like YSAM, the Youth Violence Intervention Program (Y-VIP) was developed by The Government of British Columbia Ministry for Children and Families and was based on the 'what works' literature for reducing recidivism rates related to violence. The MYC was also piloting this program. Y-VIP was conceived for youth between the ages of 12-18 and the primary target group for this program are medium-risk/needs youth in both community and correctional settings (*Facilitator Manual: Overview, p. ii*).

The goal of Y-VIP is to provide youth with a basic overview of core concepts related to anger, aggression and violence. The intent of this program is to engage youth in active learning using age appropriate activities (p. iv). There are three modules that include a total of eleven 90 minute sessions. This program suggests that a closed group format is preferable for the entire program. However, this program is also designed to add additional youth at the beginning of each module. Suggested group size is between five and eight youth. This program also recommends co-facilitation indicating "co-facilitation provides increased breadth in terms of role modelling, behavioural intervention, process management, and the ability to meet the diverse needs of participants" (p. iv).

### **Delivery of Youth Violence and Intervention**

Y-VIP was launched on January 9, 2003 and ran until January 31, 2003. We were able to spend one day preparing for this program. Like YSAM this program was also youth friendly and was structured in a way that made it easy to deliver, in total there were

16 sessions. Again, we tried to include gender specific information as it related to women and violence. This included information on both women who engage in violent acts, as well as women as victims of violence.

**CHAPTER 4**  
**PRACTICUM DELIVERY**

***Detailed Description of Program Members***

There were a total of 33 participants who participated in all four programs (this is the total number of individuals; some young women participated in more than one program which is not reflected in the total number). Participants identified their cultural backgrounds as the following; 28 aboriginal, 2 half aboriginal, 1 East Indian and 2 Caucasian. The literature review identified that aboriginal youth are greatly over represented within our correctional facilities (Aboriginal Justice Commission, 2001). This over representation was clearly evident in the population who participated in programming; 90% of the participants were aboriginal.

The age of the participants varied from program to program; the age range was between 12 and 18 years of age. The following chart is a breakdown of the age and total number of participants in each program.

**The Victim Sensitivity Program**

<b>AGE</b>	<b># of Group Members</b>
13	1
15	3
16	2
17	1
18	1

Total	14
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**The Moving On Program**

Age	# of Group Members
14	1
15	2
16	5
17	5
18	1
<i>Total #</i>	<i>14</i>

**YSAM Program**

Age	# of Group Members
13	1
14	2
15	3
16	2

17	3
<i>Total #</i>	<i>11</i>

**Y-VIP**

<b>Age</b>	<b># of Group Members</b>
age 13	1
age 14	2
age 15	1
age 16	2
age 17	4
<i>Total #</i>	<i>10</i>

The Victim Sensitivity Program had the same 8 participants from start to finish of the program. The Moving On program started with 12 participants. During the program 6 participants were on remand and released into the community, 2 participants were added half way through and one participant went ULA (Unauthorized leave of absence), leaving 7 participants who completed the program. We initiated the YSAM program with 7 participants. One member chose to leave the program and we added 4 more participants for the second module, there were 10 young women who completed this program. The Y-VIP started with 10 participants and one was released back into the community prior to

completing the program.

Overall, the majority of older youth between the ages of 16 -18 had served previous time (either remand or sentenced) at the MYC. The majority of young women were either serving time or were on remand for administrative charges, which is consistent with Corrado's et al. (2000) findings as discussed in Chapter 1.

Administrative charges include such things as the failure to comply with a probation order, at large without a lawful excuse and charges relating to the *Liquor Control Act*. An example that highlights the difficulty with administrative charges is as follows: one participant was charged in 1999 with assault and she was sentenced for a number of months and served her time. After her release she served an additional 19 months on and off for failing to comply with her probation order for her original 1999 charge. This is a common experience for many of the young women at the MYC. Of all the programs, there were a total of five young women who were charged with more serious offences and sentenced between 1 to 3 years in custody.

The majority of young women were behind in their educational levels and group members presented with a range of academic abilities. In saying this, all participants could read and write at a basic level. We were always careful to keep in mind the different academic levels of the participants. For the educational components of the programs we attempted a number of different methods to incorporate a variety of learning styles.

### **Methods to Capture the Process of Empowerment, Safety and Connection**

The following is an overview of methods implemented to capture the targeted concepts. Again, the central theme running throughout this practicum was to explore

concepts of empowerment, safety and connection within delivery approaches to programming within correctional institution. This evaluation of these concepts will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Many of the methods had dual purposes: to act as exercises to assist in the development of skills and to act as indicators for empowerment, safety and connection in the evaluation design.

### **Exercises**

Exercises are primarily intervention tools. Exercises were also used as an indicator for safety, connection and empowerment (this will be elaborated on later in this Chapter). The main purpose of exercises is to provide participants with a way of practising skills learned within each program outside of the group. In the proposal stage of the practicum, the workers at MYC wanted to find ways that members of the group could start practising the skills learned within the program outside of the group. I developed a generic log which was adapted to each program that asked participants to document positive situations wherein they were able to use the skills learned within the program and participants were encouraged to apply and document the skills used outside of the group.

The Moving On program was designed to introduce concepts and build upon these concepts as the program progressed. The Moving On program had a number of exercises built right into the program requiring participants to complete the exercises outside of the daily group sessions. We were able to adapt some of the exercises in order to make them more “youth” friendly. Appendix B is one log (Identifying Positive Skills), which I adapted for the Moving On program. I also developed a stress log (Appendix C) that I used in all three programs. In total there were three logs used in the Moving On

program, one log was administered daily. At the end of each session we would give the youth the logs to complete for the next day and informed them they would have to hand them in at each session. There were never consequences for not completing the log and we would actively encourage the youth to complete them. Both the program facilitator and myself would write comments on all exercises in order to provide positive feedback to the participants. Overall, the response was good and most youth completed these logs daily. Many complained about the repetitiveness of the logs, but by the end of the program participants found that they were in fact beneficial. The repetitiveness helped the youth identify and understand that they were learning and practising a number of different skills. This became evident as the concepts and skills learned by the youth started emerging in their logs and journals.

YSAM was a more difficult program to develop logs for, as MYC is an artificial environment in which drugs and alcohol are not present. However, for the YVIP program I developed a stress log that was also useful for participants.

In addition to this log, there are many other exercises the MYC workers have developed or exercises identified within the programs. I kept track of all exercises, when they were given, and if the youth completed them. Although these exercises were not administered in a standard way, they provided additional information that assisted in understanding the process of safety, connection and empowerment within programming. Completing exercises and sharing them with facilitators could be an indication of both empowerment and connection. Should members choose to share these with the larger group this could be an indication of safety. In addition, all exercises provided insight on group development and process.

Youth at the MYC were already writing poetry, drawing pictures and writing in journals. I thought it would be useful to attempt to guide and formalise these activities in connection with the theme of the program and more specifically the concepts being delivered within the session. For example, at the end of the session I would remind participants to try and write in their journals about the topic or concepts we discussed. These additional activities were to be completed outside of the group and were voluntary. Participants also had the opportunity to share their work from these activities with the facilitators and with the group.

Journals were an important piece of all programs. At the beginning of each group we would discuss the importance of journals and the different ways one could journal. To encourage the youth we built in a competition, the best journal would get a prize. Journals were the most popular tool with the youth. Youth were able to write, draw or develop poetry in their journals. The majority of youth shared their journals with myself and the other program facilitator. Some of the participants were able to connect concepts of the program in their journals. We would respond back in writing and made use of stickers as a form of positive feedback.

### **Interviews**

The staff at the MYC initiated referrals to programs. When youth are admitted to the institution staff members use a number of standardised risk assessment tools that were developed by Manitoba Justice to assist in making appropriate referrals to programming. However, because of the small number of young women at MYC there is only one program running at a time. Participants may be referred to a program yet it may not be the specific type of program that would best address the needs of that particular youth.

Bloom (1999) confirms this practice, she states: "Often, because there are only a few programs and services available, women are assigned to them whether they suit their needs or not" (p. 24). Referrals to our programs were not always appropriate depending on the specific issues of that youth. The reasoning behind the inappropriate referrals seem to be that any program is better than no programming. Because only one program runs at a time at MYC it is more difficult to have a program that meets all the needs of the youth. Again, this is a structural issue and is the reality of fiscal restraints and due to limited resources offered to women within corrections because their numbers are so small. This is not to reflect poorly on the MYC, there must be political and public will to sponsor equitable gender resources to individuals in conflict with the law.

Participants were chosen from both open and closed custody cottages and included individuals who were on remand or sentenced. At the current time MYC has no standard way of conducting interviews. Therefore, we developed a format whereby we co-conducted the interviews. Appendix D outlines the information collected during interviews, some questions were adapted to fit with the type of program we were running.

I wanted to ensure that each participant understood who I was and what my purposes of co-facilitating the programs were. I explained to each participant that I was a social work student at the University of Manitoba and further explained the purpose of the practicum. I also informed each participant that I was required to write a final report that would be published and explained that no revealing information about them (anonymity) would be written in the report. I asked each participant for their consent and every participant stated they were fine with this. I encouraged each participant to voice any concerns or questions and further stated they could bring these concerns to me at any

time. I also repeated this information at the first session and throughout the programs.

Motivational Interviewing as described in the Moving On program was used to interview each participant as it was felt that this was the most favourable approach.

Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 1991) is an approach that is empathic and respectful of the stage that individuals are ready to change and participate within the program. This requires facilitators to use stage-matched intervention strategies that correspond to the individual's attitude toward group process and change. We worked hard at selling the program to the youth during the interview phase in order to initiate a process that we ultimately hoped would enable the youth to take ownership of the program. The youth were required to attend the interview and try the program.

However, if at any time they no longer wanted to participate in the program they were free to leave with no consequence. In all four programs only one participant chose to discontinue the program.

A number of different tools were included at the interview stage. I had originally wanted to use an adapted "stages of changes model" (Precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance) with every program as a guide to understand at which stage participants were ready to change. Prochaska and DiClemente (1984, 1986, 1992) developed an increasingly popular model for understanding behavioral change. This model is simply referred to as the Stages of Change (Littlell & Giruin, 2002, p. 223). Stage of change was developed and empirically supported in the early 1980's. This model is widely used within health psychology and the study and treatment of addictions. Stages of change also appears in a variety of literature including mental health services, child welfare, intimate partner violence, corrections and organizational changes. Stages

of change consist of five stages; precontemplation (not thinking about change), contemplation (thinking about change), action (behavioral change) and maintenance.

Precontemplation is marked by people clearly having no intentions of changing their behaviors now or in the near future. People identified in this stage are unaware of their problem or underestimate the problem's impact on their lives. However, friends, family and co-workers have a clear view of the problem (Norcross, Prochaska, Harvard, 2002, p. 1). The contemplation stage indicates that people at this stage identify that there is a problem and they have been seriously thinking about making changes but have yet to make a serious commitment to do so. The preparation stage is described as people having made attempts to make changes without any success. During this stage people are thinking a lot about making change and their intentions are to take action. The action stage is indicated by clear behavioral changes people have made. The maintenance stage is marked by consolidating gains and avoiding relapse (Littell & Girvin, 2002, p. 224).

The workers at the MYC have developed a youth version of the stages of change which I used for 2 of the programs. Appendix E is an example of the adapted stages of change. However, after I used this tool with the Victim Sensitivity Program it became clear that this was not a good fit with the Victim Sensitivity Program. Therefore, it seemed feasible to change this tool to accommodate the topic of each program. The only program this tool was not used on was the Moving On program. Appendix F is the adapted evaluation tool taken from this program which incorporated the stages of change within this tool.

The second tool administered during the interview process was the safety scale (Appendix G). The definition of safety was explained to the youth and they were asked

to mark on a five-point scale how safe they felt to participate within the group program. This provided a baseline that allowed us to monitor individuals' safety levels. I also included the safety scale on the Session Evaluation Forms (Appendix H), which were administered daily. The purpose of the safety scale was to get a sense of whether or not safety was being achieved within the program.

### **Narrative Techniques - *The Challenge***

The literature review explores how narrative techniques can be a useful approach to interventions with youth. Programming for youth is highly structured and taking a consistent narrative stance throughout the different programs would be very difficult. What I was interested in doing was using Narrative techniques to enhance the programs and reinforce empowerment, individual strengths, abilities and reinforce when positive change occurred. I had hoped to utilise a few narrative techniques throughout this practicum. However, this was the least successful endeavour of the practicum.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Public Announcements was one narrative idea I had wanted to explore. Public Announcements encourage externalising the problem and promotes a culture where people can take a stand against the problem. Public Announcements can also act as a tool to encourage new skills and promote a positive culture outside the program. In order for Public Announcements to be effective, an environment and culture whereby taking a stand against the problem is acceptable must be present, together with a certain readiness or willingness of the participant to personally identify that there is something in their life they want to change. In all four programs, either group dynamics or participant readiness acted as barriers to engaging in Public Announcements. The only program I could have anticipated that we could have utilised

Public Announcements in was the Moving On program.

I suspect that Public Announcements would be more appropriate for longer and more intense programs. Of the four programs, Moving On was the longest in duration and the most intense in nature. In the Moving On program we were faced with a number of challenges as a result of the group dynamics. Like all four programs, the participants included young women from all three cottages. Specific to the Moving On program, we had a group division between all three cottages. We were able to include a number of group exercises that fostered group cohesiveness. These exercises were successful in achieving a more unified group. However, we added participants half way through this program, which negatively impacted both the safety of the group and group cohesiveness. The addition of members also made it difficult to establish an environment where taking a stand against the problem was acceptable to the participants.

Therapeutic letter writing was a successful tool with all four programs. The use of 'therapeutic' letter writing has been widespread within narrative therapy (Andrews, Clarke and Phillips, 1998). While the use of this technique is predominantly used within family therapy, White and Murray (2002) in their article *Passing Notes; The Use of Therapeutic Letter Writing in Counselling Adolescents* suggest this is a useful intervention with youth. The use of letter writing has a variety of purposes consisting of: correspondence between counsellor and client, engaging clients, elaboration of important elements of discussions that occurred during the sessions, client empowerment through altered personal narratives and identification of client strengths (Andrews et al., 1997; White and Murray, 2002).

White and Murray (2002) suggest that letter writing to youth "provide a

supportive resource to which they can refer back for encouragement or reminders, similar to what adolescents often do with the notes they pass to each other” (p. 3). Similar to public announcement documents, letter writing serves as bearing witness to the new changes that have occurred in individuals. Andrew et al. (1997) indicate that documents such as letters spread the news beyond the therapy room that change is occurring. Epston suggests that letters are very important to most clients and indicates on average clients read letters four times and tend to keep them as valuable objects (Andrews et al., 1997)

White and Murray (2002) suggest the following guidelines for using letter writing interventions with adolescents: look for the exceptions to the problem and unique outcomes, posing questions from a stance of curiosity can facilitate adolescents’ reflective thinking and encourage their ability to identify unique outcomes, assume that the adolescent has strength and resources and using language to externalize problems honours the adolescents’ everyday actions of resistance to the problem emphasizing the their ability to fight the problem (p. 4).

There are many different types of therapeutic letters. I was interested in using the following: letters from counsellors to clients, letters of invitation, letters of special occasion and counterreferral letters. Letters from counsellors to clients are for the purpose of emphasis, provocation, appeasement, communication with absent members, and termination (White and Murray, 2002). Letters of invitation encourage client involvement in treatment when it is evident that they are reluctant to engage. At times youth at MYC are unwilling to participate in programming; this type of letter writing would be useful to assist in engaging the client. Letters of special occasion address the times when clients are faced with difficult or special events that cause them anxiety or

stress. Such events may include the anniversary of a death, trial, seeing a perpetrator of abuse, holidays etc. Workers can use letters of special occasions to validate feelings and act as support through this occasion. Counter-referral letters serve as reminders of the progress and accomplishments of the client (White and Murray, 2002).

My original intention was to write a number of letters to participants throughout the program. Due to the number of exercises and the success of journal writing we found that we were constantly providing youth with written feedback through these mechanisms. At the last session of every program I provided a letter to each participant summarizing the positive changes, new skill developments and posed curious questions to the individual on how she may use these new skills in the future, specifically within the community. The therapeutic letters also acted as a way to terminate the group process with each individual member. Appendix I consists of examples of letters written to participants. In the End of Program Evaluations (Appendix J), we asked if the participants liked the letters and every member indicated yes. Interestingly, I ran into a participant from the first program who was released into the community at the end of the program she attended. Unfortunately, she was back at MYC a few months later. This participant stated to me that she still had her letter and would read it periodically. This confirms Epston's claim that most clients on average read letters four times and tend to keep them as valuable objects (Andrews et al., 1997).

Informally, I employed the narrative technique of externalising conversations, as discussed in Chapter 1. I found this particularly useful during a few of the group discussions. For example, in the YSAM program, the youth started to disclose how everyone (parents, teachers, police officers, probation officers, social workers, judges and

lawyers) think they are “criminals”, “bad kids”, “no good” and “failures”. This was a perfect opportunity to try and engage and invite the group to see themselves outside of being “wholly criminal, bad or as a young offender”, as discussed by Lysack (1996). Conversations were encouraged that did not label the youth’s identities as criminals, stressing that they take responsibility for their actions but their personal identities or who they are is not the problem. While it is difficult to evaluate how valuable an approach the narrative techniques are when it is not the central theoretical model of the program, one participant wrote the following at the End of Program Evaluation: “They [the facilitators] didn’t make us sound like we are problems and are criminals”. This suggests that this approach may have had some impact on the participants of this group.

### **Co-facilitating**

Co-facilitating programs at MYC is not done on a regular basis. On the few occasions they have had opportunities to have co-facilitators, they have found that it was beneficial within this type of setting. Toseland and Rivas (1998) outline a number of benefits to co-facilitation:

- Leaders have a source of support
- Leaders have a source of feedback and an opportunity for professional development
- A leader’s objectivity is increased through alternative frames of references.
- Group members are provided with models for appropriate communication, interaction, and resolution of disputes.
- Leaders have assistance during therapeutic interventions, particularly

during role plays, simulations and program activities.

Leaders have help setting limits and structuring the group experience (p. 122).

Despite the benefits to co-facilitation, conflict between facilitators is a possibility that can have a detrimental effect on the outcome of the group. Shirley (worker at MYC) and I had a very good working relationship that assisted in enhancing the program and providing a positive experience for co-leadership as well as group experience. While on a few occasions Shirley and I had differences of opinion we did not experience any conflict. When our difference in perspectives were evident in the group discussion, we utilized this opportunity to role model that we all have different ideas and need to respect each other's views.

Toseland and Rivas (1998) recommend that co-facilitators have scheduled times to meet after each group in order to review how well they worked together, to discuss what difficulties they experienced, and to plan how they will work together during the next meeting, in addition to debriefing on the group session (p. 123). Shirley and I would meet after each group to debrief with each other and another worker at MYC would join us. Often times the Director of Programming at MYC would also join us during our debriefing sessions. Having independent third parties involved in the process was very beneficial in debriefing the group. While this process occurred at a very informal level, this is where the majority of my learning took place.

Programs ran five days a week at MYC. I was only able to attend three days a week, which left Shirley alone for two days. This did not cause any problems with any of the groups, and we did not find that it impacted on group dynamics or connection. The

benefit of having one leader present two days a week highlighted the benefits of co-facilitation. In all four programs, members frequently experienced conflict amongst each other. This conflict amongst group members was related more to the residential nature of the setting opposed to the program itself. In exploring conflict we found the majority of confrontations initiated outside of the program. Having two facilitators allowed one facilitator to pull out the parties and resolve the conflict, while the other facilitator continued with the program. This caused less disruption within the group, while allowing the conflicting parties to resolve their dispute in a positive way.

As emphasized by Tosland and Rivas (1998) co-leadership provides group members with “models for appropriate communication, interaction, and resolution of disputes” (p. 122). In particular, what was interesting was the age difference between myself and the co-facilitator. I am in my late twenties while Shirley is a generation or two my senior! The age difference provided a diversity of our own experiences that we could share with the group. For example, a component of the Moving On program was to present the history of women’s oppression and how that translates to the more current issues women are faced with in our society today. We were able to provide personal examples at different points in time of the experiences we had of being a woman in our society. These discussions enhanced the theme that “while we are all individual women with differences, we all have shared experiences”. I also think this enhanced the idea that we learn from each other regardless of age or circumstances. This was an important theme that we stressed with all our groups, including how we also learn from participants.

Shirley and I shared the educational components of the programming. Shirley ran the program alone on Mondays and Tuesdays. I would deliver most of the educational

components of the program on Wednesdays. This offered a change in delivery style to the youth, which assisted in keeping the participants interested. The two remaining days we would divide up the educational material. We were able to develop a flow or rhythm as to how we delivered the program that was both comfortable and effective. When one person was presenting the educational material the other person would often add things throughout the presentation. This was very beneficial because at times we would forget important concepts or get off track. This also broke up the monotony of one person speaking and provided more opportunities for group members to speak on the topic.

Perhaps the most beneficial element of co-leadership is the ability to support each other by having two people observing the dynamic of the group and the objectivity that a two person team can offer in assessing where each individual participant is at. These advantages of co-facilitation ultimately enhance intervention, as the workers are well supported and the debriefing on each session nourishes an improved understanding of the group and its members. Co-facilitation also encourages professional development as leaders have a source of feedback on their skills and areas of growth.

### **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

Developing skills for group work with incarcerated youth was a primary objective of this practicum. One important aspect of groups is the development of positive group dynamics. Positive group dynamics encourages satisfaction of member's socio-emotional needs while facilitating accomplishment of group agendas (Tosland and Rivas, 1998, p. 66).

Communication consists of both verbal and nonverbal components of social interaction. Tosland and Rivas (1998) state that:

communication is the process by which people convey meanings to each other by using symbols. Communication entails (a) the encoding of a person's perceptions, thoughts and feelings into language and other symbols, (b) the transmission of these symbols or language and (c) the decoding of the transmission by another person (p. 67).

As group members communicate to one another, their process of communication develops interaction patterns that can be both beneficial and/or harmful to a group. The facilitators play an important role in intervening in the patterns of communication to assist in achieving the goals of the group. As well, co-facilitation provides modelling appropriate communication skills.

Chapter 1 reviewed the difficulties incarcerated young woman experience. Many of these young women have not had the opportunity to develop age appropriate communication skills. While each program targeted specific skill development in terms of communication, the group process and experience in and of itself provides opportunity to identify and practice these skills. Many youth have a difficult time expressing their feelings in an appropriate way. At times we would introduce material that was difficult for the youth in that it brought forward feelings that they did not know how to deal with or express. This would often cause participants to act out or resist learning experiences. Often youth do not have the skills to manage these emotions. As facilitators we paid close attention to these nonverbal cues and provided positive opportunities for youth to explore these feelings. Often, we would meet with individuals after the program to debrief what was happening in the group and assist the participant in dealing with the feelings that were coming out in the program. This also provided an opportunity for facilitators to

demonstrate how they could use skills learned in the program to deal with the emotions they were dealing with. We found that following an emotionally intense day, the next day we would try and plan a lighter program. This provided participants the space to process information, thoughts and feelings, rather than continuing to overwhelm them with topics that may cause more distress.

Dealing with resistance can often be frustrating for facilitators. Resistance can also have a negative impact on the group experience. Understanding what is behind resistance can often assist facilitators in finding ways to address it. Youth may not understand the material that is being presented, or they may be unclear about what you expect from them. Many youth lack the skills and resources to do what you want or to deal with a situation in an appropriate way. Youth may not perceive any incentives to cooperating with the program or they may see benefits to their current approach. Often times youth will attempt to test authority or their actions may be a direct reaction to a facilitator's action (Middendrop, Lori AFM). Understanding where a participant is at in the stages to change model provided insight into resistance and guidance in how to deal with it.

Essential to communication is language and teaching. Included in all programs was educational material that requires facilitators to teach concepts to the group. Developing youth friendly language is the first step, breaking down the concepts in a way that youth can understand is also an important skill. This was more of an issue for the Moving On program as it was originally designed for adult women. I found that preparing youth friendly charts and diagrams was helpful in delivering concepts to the youth. Trying to add experiential learning opportunities is also an important element of

working with women and youth. Many of the programs had role-play activities and fun activities built into them to assist accommodating the many different learning styles. We also used videos as a means of teaching. Depending on the topic we used a range of different type of video: documentaries, movies and educational films. Shirley developed question sheets on each video to act as a guide for discussion as it related to the topic of the program.

Speaking and understanding youth jargon and culture is a very important skill in working with youth. Keeping up with youth music, movies and youth culture enhances your relationship with the youth but also provides you with the language and content to teach youth new concepts and skills. I asked the youth to help me learn youth culture. This puts them in the place of experts and offers youth the opportunity to teach the facilitators. Many of the youth programs incorporate the youth culture. For example, one exercise asked members on the program to break into small groups and develop a rap song around a particular issue (effects of alcohol and drugs). These type of activities also demonstrate the many creative skills the youth have. Overall, youth found these activities enjoyable.

Keeping youth interested in the program was one of the most difficult tasks. Like the majority of youth, their attention spans are short. Many individuals had issues around drugs and alcohol; an effect of this is boredom. Shirley and I were constantly trying to find games that could be related to the program and activities that would hold their interest and teach them concepts and skills at the same time, adding movies helped. Building in competitions was one way to foster interest, where the winners would receive a prize. Shirley and I discussed on many occasions that our intentions was not to foster

competition amongst the group. Competition also perpetuates many of the difficulties within our society. However, we found this to be one of the most effective methods in holding their interests with the topic at hand.

The Moving On program encouraged a connection to community resources. We asked a number of speakers from the community to come in and speak to our group. The youth all enjoyed these presentations and many found them very helpful. A few of the girls connected with the resources prior to being released back into the community.

One of the most important aspects of running a group within a residential setting was group building. At the beginning of each group we would start off with warm ups. Warm ups provided a way for each member to check into the group for the day. At the start of the program we tried to use warm ups that focussed on group building and group cohesiveness. We also gave the group an option to smudge either at the opening of the group or at the end. Due to the large number of aboriginal youth, we found that in all programs the youth wanted to smudge. Each participant had a choice in participating in the smudge.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION

#### **Evaluation Instruments & Procedures**

The central theme of this practicum was to explore the three key feminist principles outlined by Bloom's (1999) article: empowerment, safety and connection. These three principles are important indicators to gender appropriate programming; they also pertain to the responsivity principle of the 'what works' literature. The two central questions that will be explored throughout this chapter are:

- 1) Is a process of safety, empowerment and connection possible within a correctional facility?
- 2) How do we know if we are achieving/moving towards these gender principals?

Developing sound clinical practice in social work is our ethical and professional responsibility when developing and choosing interventions. Our practice should be linked to theory and ideally we should demonstrate the effectiveness of our clinical practice. Evaluation designs, such as Single System Designs (SSD) offer evaluation of interventions and provide measurement tools in establishing the effectiveness of the intervention at addressing the presenting problem. SSD facilitate a process whereby we can define client problems into goals/objectives, then transforming goals/objectives into measurable targets. The targets are systematically and repeatedly measured before the intervention occurs, called the baseline Phase or A, as well as during the intervention phases, referred to as B (Bloom, Fischer, Orme, 1999). The comparison between the baseline and intervention phases is an opportunity to study changes in the target in its natural state, without any intervention, to after the intervention has been implemented

(Bloom et al., 1999). The difficulty in developing a measurement plan for this practicum is that I was not measuring client goals, rather exploring if connection, safety and a process of empowerment are achievable in group intervention within a correctional environment. In addition, these concepts are more linked to the skills of the facilitator. In saying that, drawing upon a clinical evaluation model assisted in developing a method to monitor the concepts I had chosen to focus upon. Table 1 demonstrates the quasi-measurement plan I developed in order to meet the learning objectives of this practicum.

Table 1

<b>Concepts</b>	<b>Operational Definition</b>	<b>Measurement Source</b>	<b>Time Administered</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Empowerment</b>	Feelings: How members feel about their abilities and self worth  Behaviour: members taking action/control over their lives	Journals, Poetry  Exercises  Motivation to change scale	Daily  Daily  Interview Mid Group End	To measure if a pattern/process of empowerment is occurring for participants
<b>Safety</b>	How safe do members feel to participate within the group:  A) Feelings B) Behaviour	Safety Scale (feelings)  Exercises (Behaviour)  Observations in Summary Session Notes (Behaviour)	Interview Daily End  Daily  Daily	To measure if participants feel safe to express their thoughts and feelings within the group
<b>Connection</b>	Do members feel they are able to share their thoughts,	Exercises	Daily	To measure if a connection between the facilitator and

	feelings and experiences with the facilitators?	End of program feedback	End of program	member of the group has been established
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TARGET 1-EMPOWERMENT.

The identification and measurement of empowerment as a target assess how well the intervention addressed the outcome of the target. The operational definition of empowerment is exploring how the youth feels about her abilities and self worth (feelings) and has that individual taken any steps towards controlling her life (action). This outcome was qualitatively explored by the contents within individuals' journals and poetry, exercises and the motivation to change scale. The motivation to change scale was administered first in the interview and then repeated at the end of the program. This tool has not traditionally been used as a measurement of empowerment. However, the motivation to change scale is convenient as it can be used across the different types of programs (e.g. anger management, violence intervention, substance misuse) and provides information if change has occurred for that participant. For example, should a participant indicate she is at the "thinking about change" stage prior to the program, she moves to "thinking about change a lot" stage mid point, and by the end of the program she indicates she is at the "making plans to change" stage by the end of the program, this will be an indication that the process of empowerment has started for this individual. This is not a standardized method of determining empowerment, rather, a sign that the process of empowerment has started.

All exercises, journals and poetry were introduced within the first week of programming. I constantly reminded the group about these exercises. In addition to the

exercises I developed, I kept track of other exercises youth completed as part of the program as I believe this may also provide useful information on their empowerment process. In the journals and poetry I looked for indications of how individuals feel about themselves and their abilities. Completion of these activities suggested that the youth were working towards gaining control over their lives and were utilising new skills they had learned within the group.

#### TARGET 2- SAFETY

Safety was operationally defined as how safe the youth feels to participate within the group. The concept of safety included both feelings and behaviour, as an individual may feel safe within the group but frequently choose not to participate. The measurement source of safety consisted of the five-point safety scale. This scale was first administered during the interviews (Appendix G). The facilitators' observations which were recorded in the session summary notes were also measurement source on safety. An example of the Session Summary Notes is included in Appendix K. In the Session Summary Notes I noted how active the participants were within the group, and also if each individual choose to share her journal, poetry and exercises with the group. I also included my observations of overall group safety in the Session Summary Notes. For example, were the majority of participants active in the discussion, were they revealing their thoughts and feelings, and was there positive communication and interaction amongst the group.

#### TARGET 3- CONNECTION

The target of connection was much more difficult to define and measure. Connection directly relates to the skills of the practitioner and the process of intervention,

rather than a target for intervention. I used exercises as an indicator of connection. For example, should participants share their exercises with facilitators, this was an indicator that connection was being achieved between facilitator and member. I also provided End of Program Evaluation Forms that asked participants if they felt safe to share their experiences with the facilitator. Appendix J is an example of the End of Program Evaluation Form.

### **Evaluation Design**

Again, I must emphasize that I was drawing upon a method used in clinical evaluation to offer a framework for collecting, monitoring and evaluating the targets I identified. Within SSD the multiple target design offered the best method to monitor the targets. A multiple target is made up of two or more AB designs simultaneously, which allows the practitioner to view patterns of change across the targets (Bloom et al., 1999). This particular design does not result in establishing causal relationships between interventions and changes in targets, but rather, it allows for the creation of a “practice strategy” (Bloom et al., 1999). However this does not look like a true design as I was merely using the multiple target design as a model to draw upon. The purpose of this design was to explore if these concepts are achievable within a correctional environment, exploring how we would know if participants were moving towards these targets and evaluating clinical skills.

The multiple target AB design only works for target 1 (empowerment) and 2 (safety) as I was not able to establish a baseline for target 3 (connection). A baseline for target 1 and 2 was established in the interview prior to group intervention. The scores of the motivation to change scale and the safety scale acted as baseline data. These

instruments were implemented in the interviews and at the end of the group. Because journals, poetry and exercises were voluntary it was impossible to include these within an AB design. These activities provided rich qualitative sources of data to explore if there had been movement across the targets. The measurement for target 3 simply involved whether an individual chose to share her activities with the facilitator.

## **POST INTERVENTION**

### **Safety**

Bloom's (1999) definition of safety suggests that the program environment needs to be free from physical, emotional and sexual harassment. Bloom (1999) notes that facilitators cannot guarantee safety of the institution but stresses the importance of creating a safe environment within the group/program itself. Safety was operationally defined as how safe members feel to participate within the program. The concept of safety included both feelings and behaviour, as an individual may feel safe within a group but frequently choose not to participate. There were three measurement sources, the first was a five-point safety scale. The safety scale was administered during the interview, daily in the session evaluation forms, and at the end of the program evaluation forms. The second measurement included facilitators' observations of safety of the environment and group as a whole as well as individuals' participation within the group. This information was documented in the session summary notes. The last source of data / measurement was whether or not participants chose to share any of their exercises, journals, art and so on with the group. This act suggested high levels of safety within the program.

Interviews offered a way to explain the safety scale, inform participants of the

purpose and importance of the safety scale, but more importantly it provided an assessment of each individual. We found that the more seasoned youth, who tended to be older and have past experience with both the MYC and programming felt safe going into programs. It was difficult to determine whether this was a saving face front (tough front) or truly if these young women felt safe going into the program. Most of these youth presented as feeling safe to participate in the program but it is difficult to determine if these young women felt safe to talk about feelings and experiences where they would potential expose elements of vulnerability.

Alone, the safety scale was not a good indicator of determining the safety level of each participant or the group as a whole. This is a very subjective measure, a participant who felt “a little safe” vs. a participant who indicated they felt “safe” could indeed have the same safety level. Administering the scale at the interviews offered a base line of each individual’s subjective safety level. Because this scale was repeated in every session it offered a reliable and consistent way to monitor each participant’s safety level. Should there be a drastic change in a participants safety score, it suggested to the facilitators that there was something going on and that we needed to check in with that individual. Therefore, the safety scale in combination with observations of both facilitators was a very useful and effective tool in capturing and monitoring both individual and group safety levels.

### **Safety - All Three Programs**

The safety scales revealed patterns which were consistent across all programs. The majority of youth who participated in programs felt safe or very safe going into the

program. There was a small number of youth whose safety level dropped after the first session. This would be a common experience for most people attending a new program, with new facilitators and new group members they do not know. These drops in safety rose to their initial baseline after the second session. Following the second session, safety scores rose consistently throughout the program. There was a drop in scores for particular members during particular days. What Shirley and I discovered when we explored this individually with each member was that these drops had more to do with what was happening outside of the program. Usually, it had to do with another group member outside of program hours or another resident who was not participating within the program. Frequently events that were occurring outside of MYC had the greatest impact on participants. One member's grandmother passed away, others may have spoken to a parent the evening prior and were upset with the conversation, visitors who were expected the day before may not have shown up and pending court dates were all influential factors that appeared to effect safety levels. Another factor reported in safety levels was that many of the youth develop strong relationships while at MYC. When a friend was released into the community this also impacted safety levels. This usually occurred when that friend was also participating in the program.

This demonstrates that external factors to the group and the institution can have a notable impact on safety levels of the youth on that particular day. Interestingly, these drops in safety would not last more than two days and would always return back to baseline or proceed to a higher level. The safety scale appears to be useful in indicating that there is a need to check in with individual members of the group, especially when you are also watching for connection and empowerment. Individual meetings with

participants also enhance a relationship or *connection* with the youth, as well as advising facilitators of the scope of issues the individual is faced with that may not have been explored in the interview.

A surprising outcome of the safety scale was during the V-VIP program. There was a specific event in the boys unit that called for a lock down of the entire institution. Programs did not run this day, as the entire institution was searched, each resident's cell was stripped down and each individual was stripped searched and interviewed. This is a policy protocol where there are specific steps and procedures that staff must follow. On a side note, I happened to be at MYC that day and Shirley and I went to one of the young women's cottages. While this is not a pleasant experience for anyone (staff and residents), the manner in which staff conducted these procedures especially with the strip searches was very respectful and dignified.

The following day, it was business as usual and we ran the program. The previous day's event did arise. Shirley and I were able to re-frame this event into a very productive discussion about how violence affects everyone, fitting to the program we were running. The discussion blossomed from there into the events of September 11 and how acts of violence had impacted the world including industry and tourism and how that impacts individuals in their daily lives. This was one of the more memorable discussions of all groups. The safety scores rose one point for the large majority of members. One could make the assumption that safety scores would fall after an event like the day before. It is difficult to determine if debriefing the previous day's event and re-framing the issue assisted with safety levels, or the manner in which staff proceeded with protocol, or if this event had no impact on members' safety levels. Regardless, it

highlights the complexity of understanding safety and how certain events may or may not impact the safety levels within a program.

As revealed earlier, the Moving On program was the most intense program of all three. It was also the only program delivered that was developed exclusively for women. The Moving On program built in Bloom's (1999) three responsibility principles of safety, connection and empowerment. This program was developed based on the needs of women in conflict with the law, and addressed many sensitive topics that encouraged women to look at their feelings, relationships and experiences.

Another factor that affected safety, but was not reflected in the safety scales, was adding additional participants to the Moving On Program. Due to the intense nature of this program, adding participants half way through did impact the safety of the group and affected group dynamics. Participants contributed less to the discussions, were less likely to speak about changes they wanted to make and the dynamics of group notably changed. Shirley and I introduced a number of group exercises to enhance group cohesion. However, by the time the group felt safe enough to have meaningful discussion the program was over. Again, this is a limitation of the safety scale and stresses the importance of having the facilitators observe safety of the entire group.

The exploration of group safety highlights the different aspects of safety. One level of safety is to actively participate in a program. That is not to say one feels safe to discuss emotionally painful experiences, share intense feelings and experiences. This is a more intense safety level that goes beyond program safety. It requires participants to internally explore these issues and start a journey of healing. Participants need to be ready in order to do this kind of work. In saying this, Bloom (1999) discusses affect level

as an important element for treatment program. Bloom (1999) addresses these emotions in her article:

the absence of feeling or reduced feeling is common with early recovery, and affect emerges as recovery progresses. Women need to learn to express their feelings appropriately and contain them in healthy ways (p. 24)

In the Moving On program you could clearly see this process. In the starting phase there was an absence in feelings for most participants. By the end of the program four of the participants (those who attended from the start of the program) were demonstrating emotions. Creating a safe environment is paramount in order for this type of work to occur. This would be the best indicator that safety within a program has been created.

### **Connection**

Bloom (1999) defines connection as the “mutual exchanges among facilitator and group members which should be reciprocal rather than one way and authoritarian” (p. 24). The concept of connection is challenging in that it is difficult to define. I have operationally defined connection as it relates to how open participants are able to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences with facilitators. There were two identified measurement sources of connection: a) participants willingness to share exercises which relies heavily on facilitator observations, and b) End of Program evaluation forms.

Any discussion of the concept of connection is not complete without exploring the idea of power. Anne Bishop (1994) in her book *Becoming an Ally; Breaking the Cycle of Oppression* explains that the coercive power of the institution ultimately transfers to the power of the facilitators (p. 30). Kendall (2000) in her article *Psy-ence Fiction: Inventing*

*the Mentally Distorted Female Prisoner* suggests that the:

Unequal relations of power are the very bedrock upon which prisons are constructed... While I would argue that the motives of most people working within corrections is honourable these intentions become displaced and distorted by the contradictions and demands of the institution as well as by legal accountability and public pressure (p. 82).

Kendall (2000) further explains that prison programming is based on the opportunities model which insinuates that rehabilitation cannot be imposed and that the only obligation of corrections is to provide opportunities for reformation. This ultimately places the onus on the prisoner to take advantage of the opportunities provided to them. Kendall (2000) argues that corrections have not necessarily provided opportunities to prisoners. If an individual does not utilise the opportunities corrections provides to them, they are often penalized for not accessing the opportunity. This certainly would be the case with young woman, as illustrated in the literature review. In practice the majority of programs developed within corrections were developed to meet the needs of adult men. Ultimately, Kendall (2000) claims that there is a contradiction between therapy and prison and therapy becomes an adaptive mechanism to incarceration (p. 90). Kendall's (2000) ideas of power within correctional facilities and how it relates to programming or "opportunities" can not be dismissed. As indicated in Chapter 1 prisons are inherently punitive in nature and intrinsically authoritarian and at the core exists the operation of power and control over others. Many of the individual struggles youth were faced with were related to the consequences of being imprisoned (separation from family, friends and school). Kendall's (2000) claims are not over stated and were evident with the group

programs delivered at the MYC. Once again, this is a structural issue and not the focus of this examination. The question still remains can connection between the facilitator and group members be fostered within this environment?

Goodman & Getzbl (1996) in their article *Group Work with High-Risk Urban Youths on Probation* suggest that connection is possible to achieve. Goodman and Getzbel (1996) state that “the coercive power of the probation officer/group worker soon gives way to the reciprocal activities that underlie emerging contractual and normative power” (p. 379). Overall, this was the experience at the MYC, where the majority of participants connected with at least one of the facilitators. Even with structural oppression connection is still achievable within a correctional institution.

### **Connection-All Three Groups**

Of all the participants who finished the programs only one indicated on the End of Program Feedback Form that she did not feel she could share her feelings, ideas and concerns with the facilitators. From the participants’ comments, it seems that the following are important elements to building a connection with participants: honesty, trust and patience. The entire group of young woman shared their exercises and journals with at least one of the facilitators. Based on the evaluation plan of connection it can be suggested that connection was achieved with participants during these programs.

Another important element that was not included in the evaluation plan but was an excellent indicator of connection was that a large majority of the participants would frequently ask to meet with the facilitators alone. It is possible that the youth would request individual meetings to get away from the cottages. However, most meetings with the youth were counselling focussed and offered a way to foster relationships with the

participants outside of the group. Having two facilitators assisted in meeting this demand, as we could each meet with individual participants of the group, which was another important benefit of having two facilitators.

### **Empowerment**

An empowerment model is optimal when delivering programming to young women. Central to an empowerment model is the demonstration of how women can use power with, rather than using power over others or being powerless. An empowerment model encourages group members to use and believe in their abilities, promotes self-worth and fosters steps towards individuals regaining control over their lives (Bloom, 1999, p. 24). Empowerment was operationally defined as how each youth felt about her abilities and self-worth (feelings) and has that individual taken any steps towards controlling their life (action). The outcome was qualitatively explored by the contents within individual journals and poetry, exercises and the motivation to change scale for YVIP and YSAM programs and the adapted stages of change tool from the Moving On Program. My intention was to use the stages of change scale (Precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance) for all three programs as one indicator of empowerment. The stages of change model offers a way to evaluate which stage participants are ready to change. Movement between the stages would indicate a process of empowerment was occurring.

### **Effectiveness of Evaluation Plan -Empowerment**

There were some difficulties with the empowerment evaluation plan. As indicated earlier, I did not use the stages of change model in the Moving On program.

Rather, I adapted a tool designed for the program. Appendix F is an example of this tool. The tool was more specific in identifying goals of the program and whether or not the individuals felt they had made changes in that area. This tool was more specific than the Stages of Change tool. The way I administered the tools was problematic. I only asked for participants to comment on where they thought they were at in making changes. Most youth identified inappropriate responses for where they were in making changes in their life. For example, many of the youth would indicate that they were making plans to change when their actions demonstrated otherwise. A better way of using this tool would be to have both participant and facilitator fill out the tool, to obtain a more meaningful indicator. In saying that, all participants felt they were making some changes and demonstrated movement of the Stages of Change tool.

The more meaningful indicator was the facilitator's observations of the individuals within the group and the contents in their journals. When participants were able to make connections in their journals to the contents of the program, this was the most important indicator of empowerment. For the purpose of this report, I provided a retrospective glance of the 33 participants who were members of all four programs and placed them into the following categories of the Stages of Change:

Do not want to make any changes	4
Thinking about making change	13
Thinking a lot about making change	12
Making Plans to Change	4

Started Change/Hanging on to Change	0
-------------------------------------	---

The 4 participants who I would consider not wanting to make change could not identify that they experienced a problem and therefore, were quite resistant to looking at any change. These youth tended to be younger, had minimal experience with the criminal justice system and had never been sentenced to time within a correctional facility. All four participants were held on Remand and released into the community shortly thereafter and did not complete the program. These four participants also had not attended any previous programming within the criminal justice system or the community.

The 12 participants who I considered to be in the thinking about change category could identify that there was a problem and were starting to think about making positive changes. These youth tended to be either younger and had similar characteristics of the above group or tended to be older (17 or 18 years of age) and had a lot of experience with the criminal justice system. Of this group some had previous programming experience while others had limited programming. Of this group the large majority, I suspect, started off not wanting to make any changes, and after completing the program they all either verbalised or indicated in their journals they were thinking about making change.

There were 12 participants that I would consider were thinking a lot about making changes. Again this was reflected in their participation, completion of the exercises and their writing in their journals. Of the 12 participants, 11 were 16 years of age or older and had experience within the correctional system and participated in a number of programs on previous sentences. These 12 participants also demonstrated movement within the stages of change scale. One participant in this group was quite a bit younger

and completed two programs at the MYC. In the first program she attended she was quite resistant to change and this was evident in her participation and was also reflected in her journal. After completing the second program, this participant demonstrated a clear movement in wanting to make change.

Lastly, there were 4 participants who I would consider to be in the making plans for change category. One participant completed all four programs that we delivered, one participant completed 3 programs and the other 2 completed 2 programs. These participants tended to be older and were serving longer sentences than the rest of the participants. One could also debate that these four were perhaps in the starting to make change category, and moving towards empowerment. Age and experience in programs presented as the two key factors in noting a process of empowerment within individuals. However, in an artificial and institutionalized environment it is difficult to determine if they reached this level of change. Interestingly, a psychiatric nurse who works at MYC commented on one participant, stating “she had found her voice”. While we cannot determine what level of empowerment can be achieved within a correctional facility, we can suggest that a process of empowerment is possible. How this may translate in the community would be an avenue for further research.

## **Summary**

While the evaluation plan attempted to separate all three principles it is quite evident at how interconnected all three principles are. Building a connection with youth and creating a safe environment lays the foundation and possibility for empowerment to

occur. Safety and connection were achievable within a correctional facility and so was the process of empowerment. What seems to be the best indicator for empowerment is the age of the participant and the number of programs the individual had completed. Those individuals who participated in a number of programs clearly demonstrated new skills, were utilising some of those skills outside of the group and had a marked indication that a process of empowerment had started. This raises an important factor; progress of individuals needs to be not only tracked within one program, but rather across programs. This also suggests that a one-time program is not able to address the many complex issues and problems youth are faced with. A hypothesis for future research would be exploring if gender appropriate multi-programming opportunities render better outcomes with regards to empowerment and making positive life changes with young women in conflict with the law.

## CHAPTER 6

### IMPLICATIONS

The following chapter is a summary of implications derived from this practicum.

- Co-facilitation of programs at the MYC provided the following benefits: added support to each facilitator in managing conflict and resistance, daily de-briefing opportunities enhanced professional development and skills, provided a model for appropriate communication, increased the objectivity in exploring group dynamics and participants' progress, enhanced the intervention and provided an additional person to enhance the connection, safety and empowerment principles.
  
- While narrative techniques were the least successful endeavour of the practicum, letter writing and externalizing the problem proved to be helpful techniques in working with youth. While Public Announcements were not applied in this practicum, it may be a valuable technique with a more intensive program and a group that has achieved high levels of safety and group cohesiveness.
  
- Structured interviews prior to the program provided a positive aspect to the programming. It allowed participants to meet the facilitators and assisted in initiating the connection principle. It also provided the opportunity for co-facilitators to assess where each individual was at in terms of wanting to make changes in their lives and to assess how appropriate the participant was for the program.

- SSD can be a useful method to capture targets other than client goals. SSD can provide information on clinical practice that could be useful for larger research undertakings.
  
- The safety scale alone is not a good indicator of safety. In combination with facilitators' observations the safety scale is a useful tool in monitoring both group and individual safety levels. The safety scale also tunes facilitators into external factors that may be impacting individuals and provides an opportunity for the facilitators to assist in addressing these other issues, which in turn enhances connection between the facilitator and the participant.
  
- Implementing empowerment ideology, safety and connection within a correctional facility is precarious, although it is not impossible. Safety, connection and a process of empowerment are achievable within a correctional facility.
  
- The best predictors for empowerment are age and number of programs completed. The older the participant and more programs she has attended are the best predictors for a process of empowerment. However participation within programs may not be based in choice.
  
- The lack of gender specific programming within correctional facilities needs to be addressed at a structural level.

- Exploring gender specific issues was the focus of this practicum. The overwhelming over representation of aboriginal youth within the Manitoba Youth Correctional System became quite apparent throughout this practicum. While gender specific programming is essential, equally important is culturally sensitive programming. An interdisciplinary (feminist and aboriginal) approach needs to be incorporated into programming in order to address the complex needs of young women.

## APPENDIX A

### **Ten Recommendation for Psychologists in Prison**

1. Recognise firstly that you can't out think the one who is being counselled.
2. Lay down specific objectives, once you understand what's going on, as a joining thing.
3. Don't come up with clever ideas. The person's best cure is usually themselves.
4. I recognise the need in extreme circumstances for medication, as rarely as possible. Medication alters the way people perceive reality so the answers they can give for themselves are altered. They do not provide true reflections as to the problems or the actual state of mind.
5. Ignore most types of therapies and instead concentrate on just understanding the person without the labels and possible causes, but understanding where that person is right now and seek to establish a path that is beneficial to them in the future.
6. Establish procedures in which follow-up counselling can be realistically done. If the person is here for two days and then moves to another jail the person may slip between the cracks.
7. Seek to establish some sort of stable atmosphere. If appropriate, try and arrange suitable employment for the inmate, some sort of focus for self-worth.
8. Don't necessarily believe you have the right answers.
9. Don't be afraid to ask questions. They always ask all sorts of questions but never relevant ones. They were paranoid about upsetting me. You can't help a person if you don't know what's wrong with them.
10. Time needs to be flexible. Insufficient time is spent, an hour a week in jail is not sufficient.

**(Denborough 1990, p.131)**



This log is to assist you in keeping track of all the times you deal with a situation in a positive way!

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Event:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did I feel?

\_\_\_\_\_

I was Thinking?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did I respond (action-what did you do?)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Skills and or strategies I used:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please list any other comments you have:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





APPENDIX D

**INTERVIEWS**  
**Information to be collected**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DOB:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Program:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Education Level:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Family/Guardianship:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Background:** \_\_\_\_\_

**First Language:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Clients Goals for the Program:**

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**Motivation to Change Indicator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you have any concerns, worries fears about attending the program?**

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**Score of safety scale:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Risk Assessment Scores:**

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**Impressions:**

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APPENDIX E

**How Motivated am I to Change**

Where are you on this scale?

Take a minute to think about the following question. Where are you on this scale? Take a pencil and mark where you are when it comes to changing your Theme of Program behaviour.

I don't want to change	Thinking about change	Thinking about change a lot	Making plans to change	I have already started
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**Developed by: Shirley Meixner & Winsome Russel**

APPENDIX F

Moving On End Program Evaluation

Please consider the following areas in your life and indicate where you are in the process of making change. You can refer to your stages of change material to assist you.

I would like to	Not ready to change at all	Thinking about change	Getting ready to change	Working on change	Hanging on to change
Feel more confident that I can make changes in my life					
Feel less lonely-empty					
Be more aware of my feelings					
Develop healthy relationships with people					
Learn how to stop putting myself down					
Understand why I keep making the same mistakes					
Like to be able to solve problems in my life before they get too big					
Learn how to deal with stress					
Learn how to tell people how they make me feel and what they can do to make me feel better					
Feel better about myself					
Meet new friends					
Meet people in the community who can help me meet my goals					
Feel more confident that I can stay away from crime					

## APPENDIX G

### Safety Scale

Definition: When I ask you how safe you feel to participate within the group, what I mean is if you feel safe to talk about your feelings, thoughts, ideas and experiences.

Going into the program, how safe do you feel to participate within the group?

- Not safe at all
- not very safe
- a little safe
- safe
- very safe

Session Evaluation Form

Using the scale provided, with Uncool being the lowest and Awesome being the highest place a (√) beside the answer that best describes how you feel.

1. What did you think about today's session?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Uncool	<input type="checkbox"/>	alright	<input type="checkbox"/>	cool	<input type="checkbox"/>	very cool	<input type="checkbox"/>	awesome
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2. List 3 things you got from this session that you think may be helpful in your life?

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<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
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4. In your words what could have made this session better?

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5. Did the facilitator explain everything clearly?

<input type="checkbox"/>	not clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	a little clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	very clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	awesome
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6. Would you recommend this session to others?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
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7. How SAFE did you feel in today's session? (How Safe did you feel to participate in the group and share your feelings and ideas?)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	not very safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	a little safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very safe
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## APPENDIX I

October 28,

Dear *Participant*,

We are writing letters to all the member in the group to comment on the progress we have noted in your participation of this program. If you have any questions about this letter please feel free to ask one of us. We also encourage you to write us a letter back with your reflections (thoughts) on the many questions/curiosities we ask in this letter.

*Participant* your poetry is beautiful and we are so thankful that you have shared it with both us and to the members of the program. We know that this has assisted you in your healing journey and we hope you continue to write and share your poems. You have a great talent.

*Participant* you have had your share of conflict with other members in this program and we know that this has at times caused you great stress. However, you always participated in working through this conflict in a positive manner and you continued to come to the program. In addition to being under this stress you continued on your healing journey-How were you able to do this? What strategies assisted you in managing this stress in a positive way?

You have started to explore your painful experiences of the past and present and we can see that you have been working hard to try and deal with/sort out these issues. We know that this has been very painful for you at times, yet you have continued to work hard. What things/strategies have helped you get through these painful times?

We could always count on you for setting up the classroom and cleaning up afterwards.. Thank you *Participant* for your help and support in running the program.

Your hope for the program was to learn? We were curious what things you learned about in this program?

You should be very proud of yourself *Participant*.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to assist you with your plans for the future.

Sincerely,  
Regan & Shirley

October 28, 2002

*Participant,*

We are writing letters to all the member in the group to comment on the progress we have noted in your participation of this program. If you have any questions about this letter please feel free to ask one of us. We also encourage you to write us a letter back with your reflections (thoughts) on the many questions/curiosities we ask in this letter.

You have been working very hard in program and you should be very proud of yourself. We wanted to take this opportunity to again say we are sorry for the loss of your grandmother. You have been through a lot in the past weeks (grandmother, visit home and *friend* was released) and it seems you have managed this loss and stress well. What things/strategies have you used that have helped you in dealing with these things?

You took a huge risk in program when Stan did the aboriginal life line. This demonstrated to us your strength and courage. We were curious if you knew you had this kind of strength and courage? We are also curious how you think your strength and courage could help you in the future?

*Participant,* we also know that anger would often come into your life (at least while you have been at MYC). Yet we have rarely seen anger in program. Where did anger go? What strategies have assisted you in managing anger?

You indicated that your hopes for the program were to learn how to communicate with people. How do you feel you are doing with this? We are curious if you have noticed if communication comes easier when you are not experiencing anger?

When you were asked to leave program, we were both very happy you decided to come back. What made you make this positive decision for yourself? We know that one of your goals is to return to school, how do you think this experience may assist you once you return to school? We also want you to know and remember that you are a bright and intelligent young woman. In one conversation you stated that you felt stupid. We would like you to REMEMBER the following: you are behind a few years in school- this does not mean you are stupid!

We look forward to hearing what your thoughts and feelings are about this letter. We wish you the best of luck in your plans for the future.

Sincerely,  
Regan & Shirley

December 10, 2002

Dear *Participant*,

Like our last group, we are writing letters to all the member in the group to comment on the progress we have noted in your participation of this program. If you have any questions about this letter please feel free to ask one of us. We also encourage you to write us a letter back with your reflections (thoughts) on the many questions/curiosities we ask in this letter.

*Participant*, we know you have been going through a difficult time lately, yet you continue to work exceptionally hard at sorting out all the painful experiences you have encountered. How have you been able to do this? What is helping you the most? How can we support your through your healing journey? We have also noticed your special talent of writing your thoughts and feelings and we encourage you to continue to write. How does writing help you? We are also curious about what other things you find comfort in?

We have also witnessed many changes in you since the last program. It seems to us you have found your "voice". What we mean by this is that you are able to share your thoughts and opinions more freely and you are expressing your most personal experiences in your journal and sharing it with those you trust. We are curious to know what changes you see in yourself?

The focus of this program has been around alcohol and drug misuse. We are curious to know where you are at in terms of your alcohol and drug use and wanting to know what you need after this program?

Lastly, you have not gotten into any major conflicts like the last program. What is different this program? We know in the past that anger has come into your life (at least while you have been at MYC). Yet we have rarely seen anger in program. Where did anger go? What strategies have assisted you in managing anger?

*Participant* you have been working very hard in program and you should be very proud of your accomplishments.

Sincerely,

Regan and Shirley

APPENDIX J

End of Program Feedback

1. Did you like the exercises you did outside of the group?

Yes  No Please explain why?

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2. Did you like the letters you received from the facilitator?

Yes  No

3. Did you feel you could share your feelings, ideas and concerns with the facilitator?

Yes  No

4. What did you like best about how the facilitator delivered the program?

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5. What do you think your facilitator could do better?

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6. Additional Comments:

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Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Beginning  
Group End Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session #: \_\_\_\_\_

Members Present:

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Members Absent:

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New Members:

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Purpose of today's  
Group: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals:

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Activities to meet goals:

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Narrative Techniques Utilized in today's group:

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**Critical Incidents/Events:**

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**Observation of Safety & Empowerment:**

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**Worker's Impression of Today's Group:**

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**Debriefing Notes:**

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