# “If They’re Good Girls”: A Qualitative Examination of Arts-Based Programs for Federally Sentenced Women in Canada

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**Abstract**

Prisons are spaces of violence that strip autonomy and a sense of personal identity from prisoners. Art and arts-based programming can not only be a way to combat the monotony of prison life, but to build communication skills, increase self-esteem, and help prisoners to build better relationships with themselves and with one another. Most of the research and literature surrounding arts programs for prisoners is centered around men. This project was an opportunity to explore the types of arts programs currently available to women and contribute to filling in gaps in the literature. By analyzing documents obtained via Access to Information Requests from Correctional Services Canada and conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews with program developers and mentors, it was discovered that there is not much in the way of arts-based programming available for women – and even less access for Indigenous women. The programs that are available leave women, their needs, and their trauma out of the discussion and are not mentioned in program guides. When women are discussed, it is done so using infantilizing and misogynistic language (i.e. “if they’re good girls”) that is deeply problematic. The programs are often funded by external sources, so funding is not guaranteed from year to year. The analysis of these documents and interviews lead to recommendations, including giving women (including Indigenous, queer, and trans women) more opportunities to run arts-based programs, more funding from CSC in order to combat unpaid labour, and openly including discussions of women and the issues that incarcerated women face in program guides and outlines.

**Key Words:**
Prison, feminist theory, corrections, alternative interventions, correctional programs, women, Indigenous women, Corrections Canada, intersectionality

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## Introduction

Prisons are, at their core, isolating and dehumanizing – designed to punish rather than exist as spaces where healing and transformation can be allowed to blossom. The prisoner is reduced to a number, donning a blank uniform, and becoming stripped of an individual identity as well as personal autonomy. Carceral spaces represent, not only the stripping of individual liberties, they are also spaces filled with violence, isolation, and despair. How is transformation on any level possible in such a space?

Often times, education programs and anger management programs can contribute to healing. However, not every program fits every prisoner. For example, the typical education programs (GED, college classes, etc.) in a prison may be a significant barrier to individuals with literacy issues and other types of learning or cognitive disabilities (Gussak, 2007). Therefore, it is necessary to begin to look more seriously at implementing programs in prisons outside of the conventional box that can contribute to emotional healing and intense personal transformation. I genuinely believe that arts programs can be part of this answer. The small area of research on arts programming for prisoners has been overwhelmingly positive and speaks of extraordinary benefits to people experiencing incarceration.

Since there have been prisons, prisoners have used art as a form of resistance. There is even a journal of prisoners writing about prison. The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons allows prisoners to utilize their creativity as a way to communicate, survive incarceration, and advocate

for themselves and their fellow prisoners. Prisoners have also utilized tattooing, journaling, and even drawing on the walls of their cells as a form of personal or political resistance, of spiritual resilience – or to simply remind the world that they're still here (Echols, 2013; Echols, 2018; Johnson, 2007). My specific area of research interest surrounds exploring arts-based programs for federally sentenced women in Canada. The existing body of research on arts programs for prisoners is not as robust as other areas of prison research – and there is even less literature on arts programs specifically for incarcerated women. The purpose of this research project is to explore arts programs as alternative methods of rehabilitation by examining the types of arts programming currently available to federally sentenced women in Canada – as well as to begin to fill in the gaps that surround this particular area of research. With the rates of incarcerated women going up (Zinger, 2017), it is imperative to further explore programs that are outside of the conventional box (i.e. anger management, education programs, etc.). Previous research has discovered that arts programs help prisoners to develop valuable skills like communication, self-esteem, collaboration, and developing positive relationships with staff and one another (Moller, 2011; Halperin et al., 2012; Caulfield, Wilkinson & Wilson, 2016). The artistic and creative process offers the chance for self-discovery and can act as a therapeutic process for those participating (Moller, 2011).

*Background*

Arts programs in prison have a fairly loose definition, which can be beneficial as it allows for more flexibility in terms of the variety of programming being offered. They can involve a multitude of different mediums and forms of expression, such as dance, music, visual arts (painting, sculpting, carving, beading, etc.), photography, theatre, creative writing, and even

learning how to mix and record music. Much of the literature surrounding arts programs paints them in a positive light, indicating that they can be a tremendous help to prisoners who want to learn new skills, communicate more effectively, and express their creativity without fear of judgement. These programs can also have a tremendous impact on recidivism rates and disciplinary infractions in prison (Moller, 2011; Halperin et al., 2012; Caulfield, Wilkinson & Wilson, 2016).

One such program that touts these, and many other benefits, is Rehabilitation for the Arts (RTA). The goal of RTA is to "use the transformative power of the arts to develop social and cognitive skills that prisoners need for successful reintegration into the community" (Rehabilitation for the Arts, n.d.). The program operates out of Sing Sing Correctional Facility, a maximum-security prison located in Ossing, New York. RTA gives male prisoners the opportunity to hone their acting skills and work toward a Broadway-style performance in front of fellow prisoners and staff. The program was founded in 1996 by Katherine Vockins, and has expanded to include training prisoners in dance, music, creative writing, and visual arts (Rehabilitation Through the Arts, n.d.). The program has expanded into Bedford Hills, a women's institution in New York State (Rehabilitation Through the Arts, n.d.).

The research that exists on RTA has been overwhelmingly supportive of the program. The research credits involvement with RTA as a significant factor in reducing disciplinary infractions among seasoned RTA members, better collaborative skills, and coping more positively with stress (Moller, 2011). A study by Lorraine Moller also describes the program as an opportunity for prisoners to give back to the prison and present positive and uplifting messages to an audience consisting of guards and fellow prisoners (Moller, 2011). A similar program to RTA exists in at William Head Institution in Victoria, British Columbia, called

William Head on Stage. The program has been running for 37 years and is the only prisoner-run theatre company currently existing in Canada. This program, however, only exists for federally sentenced men - and other than the website and one academic article discussing how the program works, robust research on it is lacking.

This Honours project was researched and written through an intersectional feminist lens with a focus on the needs and traumas that incarcerated women face, as well as the impact of colonialism and intergenerational trauma on incarcerated Indigenous women (Crenshaw, 1989; Monchalin, 2016). While conducting a review of the literature, I noticed a significant gap in the research pertaining to arts-based prison programs for federally sentenced women. This reflected the feminist theoretical critique of the justice system’s apathetic attitudes toward criminalized women and the fact that research and policy often leaves women out, preferring to focus on men (Chesney-Lind, 1986). It is my hope that this research is a step toward filling in those gaps, particularly surrounding arts-based programming for women.

Through the course of this research, I discovered that there is a significant lack of programming for incarcerated women in Canada, and even less for Indigenous women. Women were largely absent from the programming that was directed at them, with Correctional Services Canada (CSC) preferring to list them as “inmates” or “offenders”. I found CSC’s language quite clinical and misogynistic in its discussions (or lack thereof) of women and some of the language used in my interviews reflected this misogyny and institutionalization. In this thesis, I will be referring to incarcerated women as prisoners and as women. I chose not to use the word “inmate” as it carries a gravity and history of being hurled at prisoners with contempt by correctional staff. I also chose not to use the word offender because of the negative connotations that the word

carries. It is my belief that a person is more than their offence and through arts-based programming, they can begin to grow and leave that label behind.

*My Journey*

I have a background as a professional actor, and I wanted to combine my background and knowledge of theatre with my passion for prison reform and better programming for incarcerated women. The craft of acting helped me to work through some difficult issues, and much of the work was collaborative, which meant that I had the support of thirty-two other actors throughout my process of self-discovery. We were very much a familial unit, and I maintain strong connections with many of them to this day. To me, acting wasn’t simply putting on a costume and playing a character – it was a deep exploration of myself; a deep exploration of my past, my emotions, my motivations, and my relationships with others. Theatre allowed me to channel strong emotions into something productive and healthy. It gave me a voice, the courage to take up space in the world, and the chance to reclaim my own identity that I felt was lost to mental health issues and addiction. Acting deeply transformed me as an individual and allowed me to take control of my own personal narrative. Through this research, I want to be able to give that opportunity to those who may truly benefit from it.

I fell into this particular field of research somewhat accidentally. I came back to Kwantlen Polytechnic University at the age of thirty with an interest in prison reform and restorative justice after working as an actor for five years. Originally, I was simply going to complete my bachelor’s degree and go straight into working in probation or parole. However, I developed a keen interest in research after I took my first qualitative research class in January of 2016. The thesis you are about to read initially began as a much smaller assignment for my that

qualitative research class; it was through working on that smaller project and locating massive gaps in the literature, that I saw just how necessary further exploration of this topic is.

*The Importance of Art in Prison*

Art should be accessible to everyone; everyone should have the ability and the means to express themselves creatively, no matter the circumstances they may find themselves in. This includes those who are most vulnerable and marginalized in society. Prisoners are vulnerable; they have experienced trauma, systemic racism, colonialism, misogyny, abuse, and other factors that may have led to them coming into contact with the prison system (Comack, 2018; Monchalin, 2016). For some of them, involvement in criminal acts may have been a way for them to survive and cope with these outside issues (Comack, 2018; Balfour & Comack, 2014). Access to creative expression in prison, no matter how small, can act as a conduit for healing.

Due to the isolating and violent nature of incarceration, as well as outside factors that contribute to the criminalization of women, it is imperative that alternative programs, like arts-based initiatives begin to gain traction within the correctional system. These programs have been proven to have many benefits that prisoners may not get from other mandated programming (i.e. anger management and GED programs) and allow them to explore themselves and find a new kind of freedom in incarceration. These arts-based initiatives are often the first programs to be cut (John Howard Society, 2017; Brewster, 2014)

Due to the lack of literature surrounding arts programs for incarcerated women in Canada, I decided to keep my research question somewhat broad as much of my research has been exploratory. My research question was what kinds of programs are being offered to federally sentenced women in Canada? I chose to focus on federally sentenced women rather

than provincially sentenced women because there are little to no programs offered to women in provincial institutions. Much of my data collection and analysis involved discovering the different kinds of arts programs that are run out of federal institutions. My investigative methods involved content analysis of documents obtained from Correctional Services Canada (CSC) through Access to Information Requests (ATI) as well as conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews over the phone with a program developer and a program mentor, one of which works out of a women's institution in Ontario helping the women to write and mix their own music.

The following thesis will be broken up into the following chapters: the literature review, the investigative methods used, the findings, a discussion and analysis of those findings (including policy recommendations), and my concluding remarks.

## Literature Review

> Prisons are about no, the workshops are yes. Prisons are limits, blocks, barriers. Workshops are openings, doors, dances, breakings through. Prisons are about poverty and poor opportunity, boarded houses and rotting schools, a system that leaves so many children out. Workshops are a piece of the reply, they are about the strength of our stories, about our voices, our songs, our laughter, our resistance, about our families, our neighborhoods, our communities, ourselves, about what might and may be. (Alexander, B., as cited in Hammit, L., 2011)

The above quote is cited in Lindsey Hammitt's article called "What's Wrong with the Picture? Reviewing Prison Arts in America". Hammitt's article discusses the need for arts programs and workshops in prisons as they act as a form of resistance, emotional and psychological transformation for prisoners (Hammitt, L., 2011). Reviewing the literature on arts-

based programs for prisoners has uncovered many themes, but primarily ones of resilience, rehabilitation, transformation, and resistance. Prisons are notorious for stripping away any sense of identity; art has become a way for prisoners to re-connect with themselves, to learn positive communication skills, and to build the skills that they need to be successful both in and outside of prison (Frigon & Shantz, 2014; Halperin et al., 2012; Moller, 2011).

The following chapter lays the groundwork for how I have chosen to gather, interpret, and analyze my data and discuss my findings. Much of what I was able to gather during my literature review has indicated that there is a clear gap in the literature and research surrounding arts-based programs for federally incarcerated women in Canada. In the following literature review, I explore two theoretical frameworks that have informed my research: feminist criminological theory and intersectional theory. I have chosen these two theories specifically because they focus on women and women of colour – it has been well-documented in statistics and previous research that Indigenous women and women of colour are often overrepresented in the prison system (Zinger, 2017).

*Feminist Criminological Theory*

Criminology has a history of either ignoring women's crime, or only making them visible by casting them as victims (Chesney-Lind, 1988; Kruttschnitt, 2016). Sometimes women are cast as "deserving victims" of crime or their own personal circumstances if their race, behaviour, sexual history, or offending histories do not fit with primarily white, middle-class attitudes and behaviours (Kruttschnitt, 2016). In the rare cases that women are not seen as victims, they have a history of being viewed by criminologists as "sad, pathological offenders" (Kruttschnitt, 2016 p. 8) – or their offending is seen as vile, cruel, and monstrous (Balfour & Comack, 2014). Many

male theorists linked women's sexuality with offending and made frank and misogynistic statements, claiming that women were prone to fits of jealousy and offended out of a need for revenge (Balfour & Comack, 2014). When feminist criminology entered the academic dialogue, it sought to explore, not only the causes of women's crime, but how women are viewed and treated within the web of the criminal justice system and how patriarchy is complicit in the oppression of women within that system (Chesney-Lind, 1986).

According to Heidensohn, "Criminology was slower to respond to the influence of feminism than other areas of social science" (Heidensohn, 2012 p. 125). The practice of studying gender and crime came to the forefront with the rise of second wave feminism (Heidensohn, 2012), which began as the cultural landscape of the 1960s was beginning to shift and old belief systems were challenged (Heidensohn, 2012). Second wave feminism was part of a myriad of ideas that challenged previous ways of looking at crime as a solely male issue - and in initial critiques of criminology from second wave feminist scholars, it was noted that research on women and crime was in desperate need of exploration as well as catching up with large gaps in the research (Heidensohn, 2012).

Gender differences between men and women in terms of offending, have been not only poorly understood by criminologists, but hotly debated, as many forms of feminist theory have attempted to explain why women engage in crime (Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Kruttschnitt, 2016). With the development and exploration of feminism came different theories that sought to discover and explain why women commit crime (Burgess-Proctor, 2006): liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, and postmodern feminism. Each one of these theories has its own specific focus and explanations for deviance among women (Burgess-Proctor, 2006).

Liberal feminism seeks to achieve equality between men and women, recognizing the disparity between the social roles of men and women and the consequences of unequal power dynamics. Within a criminological context, liberal feminism views “women’s offending as a function of gender role and socialization” (Burgess-Proctor, 2006 p. 29) and believes that women do not offend as frequently as their male counterparts due to the fact that they have much fewer opportunities to do so as a result of socialization and social practices (Burgess-Proctor, 2006). Radical feminism argues that patriarchy is the source of the oppression and discrimination of women. This is because social roles and interactions are shaped by male privilege (Burgess-Proctor, 2006). Radical feminism primarily focuses on how male power manifests itself by focusing on crimes committed against women, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment. It continues to focus on women primarily as victims of crime rather than offenders. Marxist feminists believe that “the capitalist mode of production shapes class and gender relations that ultimately disadvantage women because women occupy the working class instead of the ruling class” (Burgess-Proctor, 2006, p. 29). Marxist feminists focus on economic crimes committed by women as they lack the capital to properly support themselves due to their status in society. Marxist feminists differ from Socialist feminists, who believe that gender, class, and power intersect to cause women to commit crime (Burgess-Proctor, p. 29). Finally, postmodern feminism questions the concepts of oppression, crime, justice, and how current discourse affects explanations of crime and deviance (Burgess-Proctor, 2006).

One of the most important focuses on women’s offending to come out of third wave feminist research is the Pathways literature surrounding women’s offending and connections with abuse – specifically abuse suffered as children (Burgess-Proctor, 2006). This literature argues “that there is a core set of experiences that mark women’s pathways to prison and that

child abuse plays a prominent role in these experiences" (Burgess-Proctor, 2006, p.12). The Pathways literature stemmed from Kathy Daly's research that examined the court records of both male and female offenders (Sheppard, 2016; Burgess-Proctor, 2006). Daly discovered that many of the women she examined had experienced sexual abused as children, came from a broken or tumultuous family situation, exhibited various mental health issues such as PTSD, suicidal behaviour, and depression (Sheppard, 2016; Burgess-Proctor, 2006). The Pathways literature, while aiming to focus on female offenders, finds that childhood trauma and abuse is an extremely important marker for offending in both male and female populations, effectively blurring the boundaries between men and women's offending (Burgess-Proctor, 2006). With the development of feminist criminological theories came the development of intersectionality as many feminist scholars were white, middle-class cisgender women. Intersectionality sought to bring more diverse voices to the discourse.

*Intersectionality*

Many feminist theories have been challenged, primarily by women of colour and queer women who felt sorely underrepresented and voiceless within these viewpoints, as much of feminist theory has been dominated by the voices of cisgender, middle-class white women. Women of colour argue that many of these theories have failed to take into account the oppressions and struggles of women of colour (Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Crenshaw, 1989). In response, black feminism, critical race theory, and intersectionality were created in order to bring more representation and a deeper, more complex discourse to feminist criminology (Burgess-Proctor, 2006).

Crenshaw argues that “feminist theory remains white, and its potential to broaden and deepen its analysis by addressing non-privileged women remains unrealized” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 154). Women of colour have stated that the voices of privileged, middle-class white women often speak over – or for - the voices of poor, black, and otherwise marginalized women when it comes to discussing feminism (Burgess-Proctor, 2009). Women of colour have been routinely excluded from feminist theory, anti-racist policies, and discussions because many of the white feminist theories and policies have failed to address the intersections between race and gender and how these intersections impact the lived experiences of women of colour (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw believes that “intersections of gender, race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status can position certain groups of people in a unique category because the combination of these factors can place them in a position that can have negative repercussions and impact punishment outcomes” (Crenshaw, 1989, as cited in Chowdhury, 2016).

Black women in the United States and Canada are often criminalized due to the choices they are forced to make to survive due to their economic circumstances (Maynard, 2017). These are just some of the examples of the intersection between race, class and gender. The economic survival mechanisms employed by criminalized black women in the U.S. and Canada include, but are not limited to: involvement in selling drugs, sex work, and gambling (Maynard, 2017). It is worth noting that these issues are similar to issues that Indigenous women face in Canada. Like black women in the United States, Indigenous women in Canada employ similar survival systems (selling drugs, sex work, etc.). This means that they are heavily stereotyped, criminalized, and punished by the justice system in the form of over-incarceration (Comack, 2018; Monchalin, 2017). Indigenous women in Canada are overrepresented in the justice system, making up 40% of the total population of incarcerated women (Zinger, 2017). According to

Gillian Balfour, despite the government introducing sentencing alternatives and sentencing reforms (i.e. Gladue), which encourage conditional sentences and community service as an alternative to prison (Balfour & Comack, 2014), Indigenous women continue to be overrepresented in the prison system (Balfour & Comack, 2014; Monchalin, 2016; Zinger, 2017).

The result of this systemic racism and criminalization means that women of colour are both over-policed, over-incarcerated, and not given enough resources by the system (Comack, 2018; Monchalin, 2016). In order to deal with these traumas, many resort to drug and alcohol abuse and crime and experience criminalization and racialization (Comack, 2018). Many intersectional scholars believe that these intersections of race, gender, and socioeconomic status have massive negative impacts on the way that women of colour are treated, viewed, and punished by the system (Chowdhury, 2016; Maynard, 2017; Monchalin, 2016).

A study on the rates of women of colour being placed into solitary for minor behaviour infractions supports the need for examining issues that affect women of colour through the use of intersectionality theory. Chowdhury found that a number of former black prisoners at a women’s prison reported that black women were more likely to face harsher punishments, like solitary confinement, than white women (Chowdhury, 2016) – and that being a white cisgender woman in prison was the “best combination” of race and gender in a correctional facility (Guevera et al., 2006, as cited in Chowdhury, 2016). Chowdhury suggests that future studies continue to look at the way people of colour who are incarcerated are punished, as well as the frequency and scale of punishment, compared to white prisoners as a way to determine if prison officials are “reporting that prisoners are being violent in order to justify solitary confinement” (Chowdhury, 2016, p.

56). In order to examine prisons, it is necessary to examine intersectionality theory and the ways that gender, race, and class impact and criminalize women of colour.

Many factors contribute to the understanding of the incarceration of women as well as their criminalization. It is crucial to discuss the history of both criminology and prisons ignoring women's needs as well as the history of both institutions applying similar explanations and treatment models to both men and women. Women face different barriers and issues than male offenders: sexual abuse, trauma, poverty, racialization, and physical abuse are an undercurrent to both the offending and the criminalization of women (Balfour & Comack, 2014; Comack, 2018; Maynard, 2017; Monchalin, 2016). The causes of women's offending are complex, as are their needs once they enter prison. Examining the literature and history through a feminist and intersectional lens can be helpful in both understanding and addressing these complexities.

Using feminist and intersectional theoretical frameworks to guide my research is crucial. First, conducing my research through a feminist lens will allow me to centre the voices of incarcerated women and to discuss their issues with the criminal justice system – this includes the criminalization and stigmatization of women, specifically those who are Indigenous. Over the past ten years in Canada, the population of incarcerated women has grown by approximately 29.7% - and the population of Indigenous women being incarcerated has grown by 60% (Zinger, 2017). Incarcerated women in Canada have self-reported histories of domestic violence, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, sexual abuse, and trauma. If they are Indigenous, they may also be dealing with the intergenerational trauma stemming from colonialism and residential schools (Comack, 2018; Monchalin, 2016). Due to the rising rates of incarceration among women – and particularly among Indigenous women, it is crucial to focus on feminist theory and intersectionality in order to shed light on specific issues that incarcerated women face and how

these theories link with the treatment and experiences of incarcerated women in Canada.

## The Incarceration of Women

### *Women in Prison and the Creating Choices Report*

Gillian Balfour describes Canada's history of incarcerating women as neglectful and barbaric (Balfour & Comack, 2014). Before the creation of women's prisons, women were often held in the same facilities as men; subjected to physical punishment, starvation, sexual abuse, and treated as nothing more than a nuisance by prison staff (Balfour & Comack, 2014). The needs of women were not heard by prison staff or by government officials until many prison reformers began to actively advocate for specific facilities designed to house incarcerated women (Balfour & Comack, 2014). An article by Colleen Anne Dell, Catherine Fillmore, and Jennifer Kilty supports Correctional Services Canada's (CSC) history of ignoring and mistreating incarcerated women, stating that despite minor improvements, "CSC's ideological focus continues to be generated from a male prisoner normative standard" (Dell, Fillmore & Kilty, 2009, p. 288). Still, many incarcerated women continue to face serious issues such as trauma stemming from abuse, and lack of access to gender-appropriate addiction treatment and other programs (Balfour & Comack, 2014). Incarcerated women have also self-reported being denied medication, being denied proper medical and dental treatment, and poor overall health caused by the prison environment (McKendy, 2018). Suicide is all too common in women's prisons, as exhibited in the case of Marlene Moore inside of the Prison for Women (P4W) in Kingston, Ontario (Balfour & Comack, 2014). Moore had a history of sexual abuse and trauma that many argue was not adequately treated by prison officials (Balfour & Comack, 2014). After Moore's

suicide, an inquest into the way P4W was being run began and the *Creating Choices* Task Force was created. The task force and *Creating Choices* report resulted in a series of recommendations encouraging prisons to focus on the needs of federally incarcerated women.

The *Creating Choices Report of Federally Sentenced Women* was a direct response to the administrative and public apathy surrounding the needs of federally sentenced women (Arbour, 1996). The report demanded a review of the current correctional system, one that the Task Force appointed to examine these issues deemed "patchwork" and primarily based on systems designed for men (Correctional Services of Canada, 1990). The ultimate goal of the report was to outline "a new women-centred model of corrections" (Hannah-Moffatt & Shaw, p. 30). It also incorporated the voices of incarcerated women, paying particular attention to the voices of Indigenous prisoners; many of their voices are reflected word for word in the report (Correctional Services of Canada, 1990). Their statements speak about the lack of opportunity in prison, a lack of support from staff, and abuse (Correctional Services of Canada, 1990). The task force also examined the particular issues that incarcerated women face, including poverty, racism, domestic abuse, and sexual abuse (Correctional Services of Canada, 1990; Arbour, 1996). Much of the *Creating Choices* report is a direct look at P4W. *Creating Choices* deemed the prison inflexible, causing the women to be confined to higher security than required – there were also reports of women with a high-risk classification being housed with women who were considered to have a low risk classification (Correctional Services of Canada, 1990). *Creating Choices* recommended P4W's closure based on a number of issues, including: the lack of programs offered at the prison, the prisoners' geographic isolation from their families and communities, over-security, and the inadequate cramped living conditions that prisoners were forced to endure (Correctional Services of Canada, 1990; Arbour, 1996).

Five main principles came out of *Creating Choices*: empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect and dignity, supportive environments, and shared responsibility (Correctional Services of Canada, 1990). Despite these five principles and the task force's investigation and recommendations to close P4W and create new facilities to house prisoners of various security levels, the prisons themselves were slow to change (Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, p. 31). Hannah-Moffat argues that while responsible choices was one of the principles outlined in C*reating Choices*, it is often not the prisoners who have the final say in the direction of their treatment or therapy. Rather, Hannah-Moffat argues, it is a combination of bureaucratic bodies such as parole boards, correctional officers, judges, and therapists "who often invoke a white, middle-class morality" (Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, p. 33) and ultimately decide what is a responsible choice and what counts as "empowering" to the prisoner. With regards to the Prison for Women, the institution did not shut down, and four years after the *Creating Choices* report was published, the prison was the site of one of the most infamous and discussed incidents in Canada.

*The Prison for Women Incident*

The now defunct Prison for Women (P4W) in Kingston Ontario is described as, "an old fashioned, dysfunctional labyrinth of claustrophobic and inadequate spaces holding 142 prisoners of all security levels, minimum through maximum" (Arbour, 1996 p. 16). The report paints the prison as uninhabitable, noisy, cramped, and poorly ventilated (Arbour, 1996; Correctional Services of Canada, 1990). There was a minimum-security facility located on the grounds called the Isabel Macniell House, which opened in 1990, and housed approximately eleven prisoners (Arbour, 1996). The rest of the prisoners, regardless of security level, were all

housed in the same facility, creating chaotic, stressful, and dangerous conditions for both prisoners and corrections staff (Arbour, 1996). It was within this stressful and crowded environment that a violent confrontation occurred on April 22, 1994.

The incident occurred after the implementation of *Creating Choices*. When Corrections Canada got wind of the task force's recommendation to close the prison, budgets were slashed in order to put money into new facilities that would eventually be built to better house the women in P4W (Balfour & Comack, 2014). The budget cuts resulted in increasingly poor living conditions and very limited access to programs (Balfour & Comack, 2014). The women began to complain about the living conditions as well as their frustration at not knowing where or when they would be transferred to a new facility after the closure of P4W (Balfour & Comack, 2014).

On April 22, 1994, this frustration and tension came to a head, resulting in a conflict with prisoners and staff that lasted a few minutes (Arbour, 1996). The six prisoners were placed into segregation and charges were laid against them. The women were also maced by prison staff. By Sunday, April 24th, tensions in the unit were extremely high and when three new prisoners were brought in, another violent confrontation erupted, resulting in a hostage situation, an attempted suicide, and an assault with a weapon (Arbour, 1996). Correctional staff protested, demanding the transfer of the original six prisoners involved in the initial conflict and days later, the warden called an all-male Institutional Emergency Response Team (IERT) to deal with the prisoners. Several prisoners were strip searched and left in empty cells wearing nothing but paper gowns. They were also restrained with leg irons. These cell extractions were filmed by the IERT and depicted the abuse (Arbour, 1996). Some of the women involved in the original incident on April 22, 1994 were either held in segregation for moved to a male psychiatric facility and launched habeas corpus applications, demanding their transfer back to P4W.

Many of the women reported inhumane treatment throughout the cell extractions, including being kept in empty cells with lack of access to showers, lack of phone access, not being given mattresses for two weeks, and being subject to full cavity searches. Prisoners also reported feeling silenced by prison officials (Arbour, 1996) and some were even held in segregation for approximately nine months. Dell, Fillmore, and Kilty argue that CSC justified their treatment of the women by arguing that the women in P4W were "acting inappropriately" (Dell, Fillmore & Kilty, 2009, p. 302) – or, in a way that did not fit CSC's "patriarchal definition of femininity" (Dell, Fillmore & Kilty, 2009, p. 302). This falls in line with the arguments of feminist criminologists who have argued that the system ignores the needs of women offenders by attempting to place them into male models of justice and corrections, but punishes women for challenging patriarchal ideals of femininity (Chesney-Lind, 1989; Dell, Fillmore & Kilty, 2009).

Overall, the P4W incident sheds light on the specific needs of federally incarcerated women (adequate space, access to programs, proper security measures, not being forced to live in segregation, and having decent living conditions), ongoing violence and humiliation that incarcerated women face, and how it took an extraordinarily violent incident to occur in order to get a government body to demand change for the prisoners at P4W. The Arbour Report was crucial in both documenting and changing the history of women's imprisonment in Canada. The report was highly critical of Correctional Service Canada and their defence about the P4W incident and demanded change for the well-being of incarcerated women. Providing this contextual background surrounding the experiences and treatment of women in prison will allow me to explore rehabilitative programs for women in prison.

**Prison-Based Arts Programs and Rehabilitation**

The importance of discussing the *Creating Choices* report and the P4W incident and the Arbour Report is to provide context for my own research and my own exploration and direction of the literature. The need for programs for incarcerated women as a way to build skills, relationships with staff and fellow prisoners, and improve mental health and self-esteem are essential to rehabilitation. The small amount of research on arts programs for incarcerated individuals reveals a need for alternative forms of rehabilitation in prisons. The literature on studies of prison-based arts programs have uncovered a number of benefits including reducing disciplinary infractions (Moller, 2011), providing prisoners with the self-confidence to engage in other avenues of education (Halperin et al., 2012), helping prisoners to find a new kind of freedom in the body through artistic expression within the confines of prison (Frigon & Shantz, 2014; Frigon, 2016), and improvement in social and communication skills (Moller, 2011; Caulfield, Wilkinson & Wilson, 2016, Frigon & Shantz, 2014; Halperin et al., 2012). With these results and the benefits reported by both prisoners, researchers, and prison staff, it is clear that art as an alternative form of rehabilitation in prisons is an avenue worth exploring in research.

With the exception of a few studies, much of the literature and research is focused on male populations. Programs such as Rehabilitation Through the Arts (Moller, 2011; Halperin et al., 2012), Geese Theatre Company, William Head Onstage in Victoria, British Columbia, are primarily focused on using theatre and art to rehabilitate male prisoners. That is not to say that these programs and the resulting studies involving incarcerated men do not provide clear and valuable data on the benefits of prison-based arts programs – but there is a noticeable gap in the literature on studies that focus on arts programs specifically for incarcerated women. The

tendency for these programs to focus solely on men must be examined and questioned as the population of incarcerated women continues to grow in Canada.

**A Case for Arts Programs in Prisons**

In his article on jail wall drawings, Lee Michael Johnson describes graffiti that was documented (photographed) on the cell walls of a county jail located in Indiana. The prisoners used any material that they could get their hands on to create the "graffiti" in question, and the different pieces of art covered a variety of subjects – everything from Biblical passages to horror and fantasy (Johnson, 2007). It is noted by Johnson that the guards had a difficult time controlling what they deemed to be acts of minor vandalism, and the nature of prisoners constantly flowing in and out of the jail made it difficult to pin down exactly who was responsible for which piece (Johnson, 2007). What is clear in Johnson's study is that even when stripped of supplies, prisoners will find ways to express themselves creatively while they are incarcerated; there are several motivations for this: a need to pass the time productively, a need for some form of escape for the monotony of prison life, or a need to express oneself creatively (Johnson, 2007). Art has been in prisons since their inception, and prisoners with the drive to create while doing time have been extraordinarily resourceful in finding the tools and the means to create art (Johnson, 2007). The question remains, if prisoners will constantly find ways to create and express themselves through creativity, why isn't the system considering arts programs as a viable and serious way to contribute to rehabilitation? The prison system has severely hindered the progress of research in this area, and attitudes about arts-based interventions among both prisoners and prison staff remain ambivalent. Therefore, the benefits of arts-based prison

programs go largely unrecognized by the prison system (Harkins et al., 2011; Merrill & Frigon, 2011).

In the 1980s, prison arts programs began to decline in the United States as the government saw them as an unnecessary privilege (Johnson, 2007). Arts programs for prisoners can provide a unique opportunity for the offender to express themselves in a socially acceptable and healthy way. Alexandra Djurichkovic argues that the "opportunity to participate in creative expression through the arts can be a major factor in the success – or otherwise – of the rehabilitation and re-educative process made available to the inmates" (Djurichkovic, 2011, p.5). Djurichkovic's argument for implementing arts programs in prisons is a relatively simple one: many prisoners have low literacy and low education levels, and therefore may be discouraged from participating in more conventional education programs (Djurichkovic, 2011). Conventional education programs may also continually remind prisoners of the failures that they encountered in their education as children, thus further ostracizing and pushing them away from more traditional learning as an adult (Djurichkovic, 2011). Art gives them a chance to participate in a rehabilitative program that is unconventional and perhaps can give them a link to the outside – prisoners may be given the chance to sell their artwork. This can be one of many tremendous incentives for prisoners to participate in arts programs.

Participation in arts programs also gives prisoners benefits while they are incarcerated – for example, participating in an arts program may help a prisoner gain access to certain privileges or help them to apply for parole (Djurichkovic, 2011). As prison life can be difficult for many incarcerated individuals to adjust to, arts programs can also act as a kind of therapeutic venture, encouraging prisoners to develop and improve on crucial skills that are beneficial to them both in and outside of prison, such as: relationships with fellow prisoners and prison staff,

developing better communication skills, gaining the self-confidence and motivation to pursue other educational pursuits such as GED or college programs, reductions in anger and strong emotional outbursts, teaching discipline, reduction in disciplinary infractions, enhancing self-esteem and self-worth, and giving back to the prison in a positive way (Blacker, Watson & Beech, 2008; Brewster, 2014; Caulfield, Wilkinson & Wilson, 2016; Gussak, 2007; Halperin, Kessler & Braunschweiger, 2012; Moller, 2011). Prisoners have been making art and utilizing their creativity since the implementation of the prison system, and with all of the benefits associated with participating in prison-based arts programs, it is necessary that both researchers and the government begins to look at them as viable options for rehabilitation and transformation. The following section of this literature review will discuss several arts programs available for male prisoners in the United States, Europe, and Canada. It will also discuss the few programs available for women, reflecting the gap in both research and programs available for incarcerated women in Canada.

## Arts Programs in the United States

### *California*

For many years, California was a leader in arts-based prison programs until budgets were slashed in 2010 due to an overall budget crisis in California state prisons (Brewster, 2014). However, despite the financial setback, arts programs in California state prisons continue to thrive and continue to be studied. In his quantitative evaluation of arts programs in California prisons, Larry Brewster measured "attitudinal and behavioral changes in inmates who participated in theater, visual arts, poetry, and writing courses offered in for California state prisons" (Brewster, p. 9). The programs that Brewster studied were: The Actor's Gang Prison

Project (located at the California Rehabilitation Centre), the Marin Shakespeare Theatre Program (San Quentin State Prison), a visual arts program in Soledad, a poetry class also located at San Quentin, and finally, a writing course at the California State Prison (Brewster, 2014). All of the programs studied by Brewster were programs for incarcerated men (Brewster, 2014) and it was noted that many of the men, when asked why they wished to participate in these arts programs, mentioned that they enjoyed being creative and that they were motivated by a strong desire to change the outcome of their lives as well as creating something that they could share with their connections outside of prison (Brewster, 2014). The participants also mentioned that being creative and participating in art programs in prison helped them to "express themselves, relieve stress, feel happier, be creative, and make better choices" (Brewster, 2014, p. 10). Like much of the other research in this area, Brewster also found that art helped the participants form a better and deeper understanding of themselves and engage in healthier communication methods with other prisoners (Brewster, 2014).

*New York: Rehabilitation Through the Arts*

Rehabilitation Through the Arts (RTA) is a theatre program for male prisoners at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Ossining, New York. The program is most famous for its theatre component that allows the prisoners to audition for the program and work together to mount a Broadway-esque production that is performed in front of the entire prison (Rehabilitation Through the Arts, n.d.; Moller, 2011). In her article, "A Day in the Life of a Prison Theatre Program", Lorraine Moller lays out the three goals of RTA, which are "the production of original and established plays to provide entertainment, cultural enrichment, and positive messages to the prison community; the application of drama as education and as a rehabilitative tool; and the

development of theatre projects of artistic integrity and professionalism" (Moller, 2011, p. 52). Although RTA has struggled through the years to maintain its funding, it has ultimately been upheld as one of the premiere prison theatre programs in the United States. RTA has expanded into a women's facility, but the available literature focuses on men. The program also offers prisoners the opportunity to participate in writing workshops and visual arts, but much of the literature focuses solely on the program's theatre component.

The literature surrounding RTA has been positive, describing the program as transformational for the prisoners who participate. A study by Lorraine Moller discussed how incarceration negatively impacts the amount of life roles (i.e. student, parent, etc.) that people take on throughout the course of their lives. Moller's examination of RTA found that "the longer the men were in the program, the more character roles and theatre functions they experienced. The more they participated, the more they manifested pro-social behaviour." (Moller, 2011, p. 10). The men also prioritized the theatre project that they were working on, putting a significant portion of their energy into it and less time breaking prison rules that would force them into keeplock (solitary confinement) (Moller, 2011). A follow-up study by Halperin, Kessler, and Braunschweiger is an equally positive examination of RTA, stating that the program fosters a sense of community among the participants by allowing them to collaborate and work together to put on a performance (Halperin, Kessler & Braunschweiger, 2012). Participation also helped to improve the self-esteem of participants, allowing them to express themselves through performance and writing (Halperin, Kessler & Braunschweiger, 2012). Halperin, Kessler, and Braunschweiger also found that participation in RTA lead to many of the members completing educational programs compared to non-RTA participants (Halperin, Kessler, & Braunschweiger, 2012). Halperin, Kessler, and Braunschweiger note that these results could be interpreted in a

variety of ways, one being that RTA members developed confidence and skills as a result of the program that carried forward and motivated them to achieve educational goals (Halperin, Kessler & Braunschweiger, 2012). While information on these arts programs is valuable, a primary criticism remains: why is there so little literature on arts programs for incarcerated women?

*North Carolina*

Ashley Lucas's study on arts programs at the Raleigh Correctional Center for Women in North Carolina is one of the few that focuses specifically on women and their study of art. In her study, Lucas poses a staunch criticism on how both program developers as well as the general public view art created in prison. She states:

> Many members of prison ministry groups, law enforcement officials, community arts organizations, and university professors connected to arts programs in prisons suggest that the purpose of engaging incarcerated people via artistic practice is to urge them toward personal transformation and reform, often through the process of recounting—either literally or representationally—their past misdeeds and then professing remorse. In this line of thinking, the arts serve as a means to an end (i.e., self-discovery and confession) rather than as a rigorous craft steeped in history and studied technique. Prisoners, in turn, are often characterized as the objects of their own art rather than the agents who created it, and in this light audiences perceive prisoners' art as psychologically revelatory—as a window into the deviant soul. (Lucas, 2013, p. 135).

During her study on prison arts programs, Lucas witnessed the development of three separate arts programs at the Raleigh Correctional Center for Women. The first was a writing workshop where the program leader, a writer named Judith Reitman, pushed the women in the

group to be as truthful and “unfiltered” about their lives as possible. Reitman reportedly pushed the women toward raw and truthful writing that abandoned cliché as well as the glossing over of their own personal truths (Lucas, 2013). To an outsider, this may seem aggressive as a workshop technique, but Lucas found that “most of the women in the workshop found this atmosphere of rigorous interrogation of the emotional and factual truth of their life experiences to be valuable—an exercise in personal growth and a useful tool in their emotional development” (Lucas, 2013, p. 139). Overall, the women found the workshop a positive experience that allowed them to develop as writers (Lucas, 2013).

The second workshop, a theatre workshop also lead by Reitman demonstrated a dramatic shift in the writing that the women produced (Lucas, 2013). It was no longer a deep, personal exploration into trauma and emotions – instead, the women collaborated to write, produce, and perform a larger, fictionalized play that would be viewed by a wide audience (Lucas, 2013). Throughout the progression of the workshop, including the final performance, the prisoners are able to establish themselves as serious artists who have taken the time to hone their craft (Lucas, 2013). Lucas remarks that the audience as able to see the “enduring humanity of the women on stage rather than the fact of their incarceration” (Lucas, 2013, p. 153). This translates into the third and final workshop at the prison, a music workshop where the women came together to write and record their own music – some of whom had little experience even playing a music instrument. While the songs that were produced were about experiences that all of the women in the group had shared, they had evolved from the rawness of the writing workshops into something that no longer revolved around their own personal traumas (Lucas, 2013). The end result was an exercise in collaboration in which the women gained confidence in their skills as songwriters, and made art for the sake of making art, not simply for the sake of “confessing their

sins" (Lucas, 2013). Lucas's study demonstrates the ability for art to translate into essential skill development that can assist prisoners both inside and outside of prison. Its therapeutic nature as well as the ability to hone a particular craft was a highly positive experience for all of the women involved.

*Arts Programs in Europe*

Elise Merrill and Sylvie Frigon discuss the role of theatre and its contribution to the transformation and growth in the lives of incarcerated and criminalized women (Merrill & Frigon, 2015). Merrill and Frigon's study of the Clean Break Theatre Company was conducted in the U.K. – the reason for this being that arts programs for women (specifically theatre) are more widely available in the U.K. Clean Break is a theatre company based in London, England, that offers free courses in acting, writing, and personal development for women who have come into contact with the prison system - or women who may have come into contact with police or served a sentence in the community (Merrill & Frigon, 2015). Merrill and Frigon conducted interviews with the women involved in the program; they also observed some of the women while they interacted with staff as well as one another.

The women who were interviewed for the study expressed that they enjoyed the chance to bond with other women who had been through similar circumstances (Merrill & Frigon, 2015). They also relayed how the classes put them in touch with their own voices, physicality, and as a result, they developed a kind of confidence that they had never experienced before (Merrill & Frigon, 2015). A study conducted around various arts programs in Corton Vale, Scotland's primary prison for women noted similar findings to Merrill and Frigon's study (Nugent & Loucks, 2011). Incarcerated women who went through arts programs reported that

the programs had a "significant positive impact…especially in building self-confidence, self-esteem, and social capital" (Nugent & Loucks, 2011, p. 367). Nugent and Loucks, in their final report, note that there are a number of limitations to implementing arts programs in prisons, including overcrowding, understaffing, and a severe lack of resources (Nugent & Loucks, 2011). These are issues that arts-based prison programs in Canada also face (Merrill & Frigon, 2015).

*Arts Programs in Canada*

Sylvie Frigon and Laura Shantz's discussion on dance in prison is a highly cited piece of literature on the impact of art on incarcerated women. What is unique about Frigon and Shantz's particular work is the examination of dance as a methodology that "allows the researcher to take new perspectives, transcend set categories, and question existing knowledge and practice" (Frigon & Shantz, 2014, p. 84). Frigon and Shantz also discussed dance as a form of resistance to the restriction and monotony of prison, in addition to offering a transformative and positive experience in such a confined and punishing space (Frigon & Shantz, 2011). Their work was based on a previous workshop conducted at a Fresnes, a prison in France that has a specific wing designated for women.

Professional dancers were brought into the prison in order for the researchers to assess the impact of prison on the body. The dancers worked with the prisoners involved in the workshop, and in subsequent interviews, expressed feeling exhausted and weighed down by the prison environment (Frigon & Shantz, 2014). The researchers noted that the impact of the prison environment was visible in the body movements and postures of the prisoners who were participating in the workshop (Frigon & Shantz, 2014). Through the process of the workshop and an eventual performance, the prisoners expressed that they noticed a significant change in both

their bodies and their attitudes. One woman described the process as a connection with her childhood emotions and both the prisoners and artists developed strong connections to one another (Frigon & Shantz, 2014). Frigon and Shantz's work showed that dance allowed the prisoners and the dancers to "learn more about themselves, one another, and the carceral environment through the dance project" (Frigon & Shantz, 2011, p. 100). Their research echoes similar benefits to previous studies on arts programs in prisons, and Frigon partnered with Elise Merrill to examine the impact of theatre on women involved in the justice system in the United Kingdom.

Merrill and Frigon state that Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) classifies arts programs as "leisure" instead of assigning it the same classification as other programs (Merrill & Frigon, 2015). Merrill and Frigon argue that theatre programs should be reassessed by CSC in order to provide an alternative form of programming for incarcerated women. In their examination of the *Creating Choices Report*, they argue that the report states that a partnership between the community and the correctional system is necessary in order to create long-term rehabilitation solutions for previously incarcerated and criminalized women (Merrill & Frigon, 2015) – this includes theatre programs both inside of prisons and as viable options for healing and transformation while on probation or parole (Merrill & Frigon, 2015). However, this does not mean that arts programs for prisoners have gone unexplored in Canada. While accessing official reports and peer reviewed literature has proven significantly difficult for the purposes of this review, I was able to locate some grey literature on specific programs: William Head on Stage, the Lullaby Project, and Pros and Cons, a music program at the Grand Valley Institution for Women.

*William Head on Stage*

William Head on Stage is Canada’s only theatre program for incarcerated men. The program is run by the prisoners. It has been running at William Head Institution, a minimum-security prison located in Victoria, British Columbia, for thirty-seven years (William Head on Stage, n.d.). The website provides no details on the program in terms of how it is funded, how many prisoners have participated, or how the program is run. However, an article by Monica Prendergast explains not only how the program is run, but how much it means to the men who are involved.

William Head on Stage (WHoS) is run by four to five prisoners, depending on the year. These prisoners are familiar with the ins and outs of the program and have been appointed to a board in charge of casting and production (Prendergast, 2016). Often times, the program will work with outside actors and artists, paying them a small stipend for their participation. However, this stipend depends entirely on how much funding they are able to receive from various grants (Prendergast, 2016). Prendergast notes that WHoS’ production of *Here* received a total of $20,000 in grants from both the Canada Council for the Arts and the Capital Regional District Arts Development Office (Prendergast, 2016), but not all productions receive the same grant per year. Some years, WHoS is only offered a few hundred dollars to fund a production (Prendergast, 2016). The grant process is just one of the many stressful issues that face this prisoner-run theatre company.

Prendergast discusses the issue of having props, costumes, and various materials needed for each production rigorously inspected by prison staff (Prendergast, 2016). This inspection process is a stressful one for all involved, as anything deemed contraband cannot be allowed

inside of the prison. Despite this stress, the productions are wonderful, enriching experiences for the prisoners (Prendergast, 2016).

The most fascinating point of note in Prendergast’s article is the “talkbacks” – these are powerful post-show dialogues between the prisoners and the public. Prisoners are able to express to an audience what being a part of such a collaborative experience means to them and discuss their overall experiences as well as any changes that they have felt within themselves (Prendergast, 2016). The prisoners express how valuable WHoS has been in both their rehabilitation and transformation, and how it has offered them a sense of vulnerability and community that they have not experienced previously (Prendergast, 2016). These talkbacks are often emotional for both prisoners and audience members - and Prendergast notes, “these dialogues are, in my view, the strongest measures of our success” (Prendergast, 2016, p. 349). WHoS allows the men involved to be vulnerable, to express themselves, and to work together in a positive and transformative experience. The opportunity for prisoners to engage with the public through their art is a valuable measure of success.

*Pros and Cons, AGIR, and Contemporary Dance in Prisons*

Pros and Cons is a music program located at the Grand Valley Institution for Women. The program boasts an album that was written, recorded, and sung by the women residing in the institution (Pros and Cons, n.d.). Like the WHoS website, there is little information on how the program is funded or run, but the songs that the women recorded are available for download. This is a way for the women to make their voices heard and connect with the outside, something that Prendergast’s study noted was incredibly important to the men at William Head Institution.

However, despite this, there is little research and literature on this program as well as programs like it that are offered through the Elizabeth Fry Society in Quebec.

The Art of Women in Prison Exhibition (AGIR) is funded through government grants, including the Inter-Arts Office of the Canada Council for the Arts (The Société Elizabeth Fry du Québec, 2014). The program is described as a “collaboration between non-incarcerated professional artists and women caught up in the criminal justice system who may or may not also have artistic experience” (The Société Elizabeth Fry du Québec, 2014). The goal of the program is to challenge ideas of women’s incarceration and to battle stigma and stereotypes that criminalized women often experience as a result of going through the criminal justice system (AGIR, 2014). The program held the following workshops over the course of two years: photography, video production, self-portraiture, singing, dance, and performance art (The Société Elizabeth Fry du Québec, 2014). All of the work was eventually put together by Vanesa Mazza and exhibited for the public at the Eastern Bloc Gallery in the summer of 2011. The workshops were also documented through video and photography in order to “deconstruct the prejudices commonly held in our society about criminalized women and poverty” (The Société Elizabeth Fry du Québec, 2014). There was also a dance workshop offered at the Maison Tanguay prison for women. The workshop was led by Claire Jenny, a professional dancer and artistic director of Point Virgule, a dance program in France. The workshop was based in Quebec and mixed professional dancers with incarcerated women to create a 45-minute dance recital (The Société Elizabeth Fry du Québec, 2014). The recital was combined with video images in order to address themes of incarceration and how it impacts the body and movement (The Société Elizabeth Fry du Québec, 2014). Claire Jenny also put on a similar workshop at the Joliette Institution for Women. These arts workshops and programs offer incarcerated women the

chance to express themselves, to explore their own experiences of incarceration, and to find a new kind of freedom in the art that they create.

*The Lullaby Project*

The Lullaby Project is run by Robyn Flannigan, a Newfoundland illustrator (CBC, 2019). The program runs out of Clarenville Women’s Correctional Centre in Newfoundland. While there is no current academic research on the program itself, there is grey literature available for analysis. The Lullaby Project brings together incarcerated women and asks them to write songs that are deeply personal for them. David Buley, one of the mentors in the program, made it clear that “it’s not about me coming and saying, ‘This is the kind of music you should have.’ I try not to do that” (David Buley, as cited in CBC, 2019). The women involved in the project are given full artistic licence and autonomy to write the songs that they want to write; the lullabies tell each woman’s story, and cover a wide range of emotions and subjects that are unique to each individual (CBC, 2019). The goal of the Lullaby Project is to allow the women to share their lived experiences, their lives, their frustrations, and the multitude of issues that come along with experiencing incarceration (CBC, 2019).

Once the lullaby was composed and completed, Buley took it home to annotate each song and turn the music into sheet music. The women are listed as the sole composers of their own songs. (CBC, 2019). This kind of recognition can give prisoners a tremendous sense of accomplishment and self-worth. Flannigan makes it a point to refer to the women as “composers” and “poets” rather than inmates or prisoners (CBC, 2019). Once the lullabies have been written and scored by Buley, they are ready to be performed for guests and prison staff (CBC, 2019). The Lullaby Project has been hugely successful in Clarenville and has become an

important part of the programming there. The Lullaby Project, like so many other arts-based initiatives in prison, brings together prisoners, artists, and correctional staff. It also gives women a safe and secure place to write honestly and openly about their experiences both in and out of the prison system.

*Conclusion*

The lack of available literature and research surrounding how women’s programs like Pros and Cons, the Lullaby Project, the contemporary dance workshop, and AGIR program runs – and women’s programs in general - is disappointing. Ultimately, however, it contributes to the significant gaps in both research and literature on arts programs for federally sentenced women in Canada. It is clear that some arts-based programs exist for women in Canada, but the lack of research either shows a lack of access to these programs, a lack of interest in funding them - or both. This glaring omission in women’s programming reflects aspects of feminist criminological theory, particularly those aspects that accuse the justice system of ignoring women and their needs. It also reflects intersectionality theory, as much of the literature does not seem to mention the needs and experiences of Indigenous women and women of colour while incarcerated.

This gap in the literature could also speak to CSC’s overall view of incarcerated women and their treatment of them, as shown in the previous chapter regarding the P4W incident and Canada’s history of mistreating incarcerated women and simply grouping them with male offenders without directly addressing the needs of women. These gaps also reflect much of the feminist theory and literature that states that criminalized women and their needs are often ignored by the system; if the women involved in the Pros and Cons program have benefitted from it, the program deserves examination and research. More research provides more value to

these programs and that incarcerated women at other institutions could gain access to similar arts-based programming in Canada.

These gaps in research on arts-based programming for incarcerated women ties into the theoretical frameworks that I am choosing to use for this particular research. Feminist Criminological Theory and Intersectionality discuss the tendency for criminology to ignore women’s offending, women’s needs, and women’s criminalization. These theories also address how factors like race, gender, sexuality, and disability intersect in order to further oppress and stigmatize women in the criminal justice system. For my own research, utilizing these theories and conducting my research through a feminist intersectional lens has allowed me to centre the voices of incarcerated women, determine their specific needs, and determine the specific types of programming that they need in order to be successful in their rehabilitation. My methodology chapter will help to fill in some of these gaps and unanswered questions through a feminist and intersectional lens.

## **Investigative Methods**

Due to the fact that so much of my research topic was relatively unexplored territory, much of my exploration felt quite messy. This particular area of study, I have discovered, is filled with gaps, questions, and blank spaces that kept me digging and constantly uncovering new themes and new pieces of information. The methods that I undertook in this particular project were my way of attempting to navigate this and fill in a few of those gaps, particularly surrounding arts programming for incarcerated women.

For this project, I utilized two primary qualitative methods of data collection and data analysis. The first was data collected from an Access to Information Request (ATI) that was filed with Correctional Services Canada (CSC). I engaged in content analysis of this data, coding for a variety of themes. That analysis allowed me to determine what was included in the program guides, as well as what was missing from them.

The second investigative method utilized was data collected from two one-on-one semi-structured interviews with a program developer and a program mentor, both of whom work in the same program out of a women’s institution in Ontario. These methods were most appropriate in answering my research question of “what kinds of arts-based programs are currently available to federally sentenced women in Canada?” as they were able to give me the most well-rounded answers, and leave me with new questions to explore in further research.

As many of the studies I encountered during my initial review of the literature were focused primarily on arts programs for men, I decided that it was best to use ATIs and interviews in order to obtain a clearer picture on the types of programs available to women at the federal level. The data obtained from the Access to Information Requests gave me a glimpse at the specific kinds of programs offered to federally sentenced women as of 2017. These documents included program guides, press release drafts, and inter-departmental emails between high level CSC staff and program developers/facilitators of prison-based arts programs. The data collected from the ATI requests combined with the one-on-one interview provided me with a richer, more in-depth look at a specific arts-based prison program that was offered to the women at Grand Valley Institution for Women.

The two interviews that I conducted gave me a glimpse into the emotional and psychological impact of these programs on incarcerated women, the emotional and psychological

impact on program facilitators, and the support that these facilitators received from CSC staff – something that came as a surprise to me. My interviews were genuine eye-opening experiences that added a new layer of depth to my findings and challenged some of the pre-conceived notions that I had about CSC's support of arts-based programming. The interviews with the program developer and the program facilitator also provided me with a deeper level of insight that an analysis of program guides and program descriptions would have been unable to give me had that been the only investigative method I chose to engage in. The following chapter will detail the process of filing an ATI request, the data I received, how and what I coded for when analyzing that data, as well as detailed information on how I conducted my interviews, how I chose to transcribe them, and how I coded them.

*Access to Information Requests*

An Access to Information Request is something that is extraordinarily useful for researchers as it allows them to access documents that are not accessible to the public – documents like emails, internal memos, press release drafts, etc. (Larsen, 2013). ATI Requests are generally used by investigative journalists to gain access to these documents. However, for researchers with little to no access to data on their particular topic, these types of requests can be eye-opening and provide them with valuable information that is not otherwise accessible (Larsen, 2013). As I had very little information to gather data from, filing an ATI Request was essential to my research.

My experience with ATI Requests was fairly simple and straightforward – I credit that with the fact that the information that I requested was not very politically charged, I was only requesting data from one government agency, and there was very little data (23 pages, to be

precise) that CSC could give me on arts-based programs for federally sentenced women. I began my request in late October with the assistance of Mike Larsen. We drafted a very specifically-worded request in order to obtain the data that I needed for this project. The wording of the request was key, I discovered, to getting the data that I needed and ensuring that I did not have to file multiple requests with CSC which would significantly delay my project. My request read as follows:

> *Program descriptions, program guides, and program evaluations for any and all programs for federally-sentenced women that involve arts (visual, music, theatre, dance, etc.) - including pilot programs. The date range for this request is January 1, 2016 - present. Should any clarification be required, I would prefer to be contacted via email.*

I then filled out the rest of the information that they required, which included: my full name, address, phone number, whether I am a Canadian citizen, and if I am in media, academia, business, an organization, a member of the public, or if I decline to identify as any of the previous listed. I was unable to file my request online, so I mailed it along with a processing fee of $5.00 (paid by cheque) and waited for a response from the analyst via email or phone. I filed my request on November 1, 2018 and received an email from the CSC analyst on November 19, 2018 confirming my request and follow up. The email read as follows:

> *Good afternoon Ms. Skorstengaard,*
>
> *I am the analyst working on the attached Access to Information Request. I wanted to confirm if you are looking for information specifically on official CSC programs in general or activities provided at the institutional level?*

I requested information on both official CSC programs and general activities provided at the institutional level in order to gain as much data as possible. I received hard copies of my

requested documents via mail on December 18, 2018. Initially, I had requested electronic documents – however, the hard copies provided me with the opportunity to physically engage with - and code my data. The data that I received from the CSC analyst included program guides, program descriptions, internal memos, internal emails between CSC staff and program facilitators, and news articles on the Pros and Cons program, which is a music program that operates out of Grand Valley Institution for Women. I chose not to analyze or code the news articles as I am not conducting a media analysis, and these articles can easily be found online as some of them were part of my literature review.

Initially, I was concerned that I would receive very little to no data at all to analyze from CSC. Because there was so little research, I was doubtful that there would be much in the way of arts programming, specifically for women. In discussion of these concerns with my supervisor, we decided together that if I did not receive data a) in time or b) at all from CSC, as a “back up” plan of sorts, interviews and content analysis of art (poetry and essays) written by incarcerated women would then serve as my two primary methods of investigation. Luckily, I received my data well before the data collection deadline of the end of January 2019.

I engaged in open inductive coding of my data, which involved identifying and labelling certain themes in my data (Hoonaard, 2014). I did not know what I was going to receive from the analyst CSC, so I opted not to make concrete decisions about the themes I was going to code for beforehand. That being said, it is worth noting that all of the programs that I received data on are – or were – being offered only at the federal level and thus, I did not code for whether the program was federal or provincial. When engaging with the data, I made the decision to code for the following themes: language of the program, program type, program description, the location of the program, contractor duties, contractor obligations, prisoner classification (high, medium,

or minimum), participant limit in each program, whether the program was an Indigenous program, and whether or not the program outline or program description discussed women.

I am engaging in intersectionality theory in my research, and since Indigenous women make up approximately 40% of the prison population (Zinger, 2017), it is important that I look for, analyze, and acknowledge Indigenous programming and the Indigenous methods that I come across. I decided to code for these issues in particular in order to engage more deeply with my chosen theoretical frameworks, and because there is so little known about arts programs for women in prison – or arts programs for incarcerated Indigenous women. These particular findings surrounding Indigenous programming and Indigenous women will be further elaborated on in my discussion and analysis chapter.

During the coding process, it was crucial for me to look for mentions of the word “women” in the data that I received, as I am engaging with feminist criminological methods. I did not encounter this word frequently during the coding and analysis. Instead, I encountered the word “offender” or “inmate”, which echoed and supported much of what I read while engaging with feminist criminological theory – women are occasionally acknowledged in offending and in prison, but it does not seem to be the norm. There was little mention of women’s specific needs or the issues that they struggle with (domestic violence, custody issues, sexual abuse, trauma, etc.). This led me to believe that some of these program outlines may be “cut and paste” versions of programs originally created for men. This also lends credence to feminist criminology’s critique that the system tends centre men and simply adds women as an afterthought (Chesney-Lind, 1986). As with the links to Indigenous programming and intersectionality theory, I will discuss this issue further in my discussion and analysis chapter.

An ethical concern that was brought to my attention while investigating literature on Access to Information Requests was encountering the Hawthorne Effect – a phenomenon that was discussed by Larsen and Walby in their examination of Access to Information Requests. The Hawthorne Effect, also called the Observer Effect, is a behavioural phenomenon in which government bodies or individuals being observed alter their behaviour as a result of being watched or monitored (Larsen & Walby, 2012). Again, while my research was not particularly politically charged and this project is considered to be below minimal risk, the Hawthorne Effect was not a massive concern to me. Rather, it was something I was told to watch out for during the course of my research. Interestingly, I have reason to believe that I may have encountered the Hawthorne Effect during my research. However, I have no official way of knowing. When I received my documents from my ATI Request, several of them had the page number – or numbers – and then the words “are not relevant/sont non pertinentes”. In total, seven pages were considered to be “not relevant”. There was no explanation as to why they were not relevant, and I was left only to guess. I made note in my research journal that these pages may have been the result of the Hawthorne Effect, or they may have simply not fit the requirements stated in my initial request to the analyst.

While reading and coding the documents, I noticed that the analyst had attached post-it notes to each program guide and labelled them as “music program”, “visual arts”, “photography”, etc. I assume this was to keep track of – and notify me – of the various types of programming that was being offered. However, the analyst neglected to take the post it notes off of the documents before scanning them, thus cutting off portions of words and paragraphs. I was forced to make note of this during the coding process as it inhibited my ability to gather data

accurately. While this is not an example of the Hawthorne Effect, it impeded portions of my data collection, coding, and data analysis.

Overall, the ethical issues that I encountered while filing and receiving my ATI requests were minimal. This method of research allowed me a glimpse at the kinds of programs offered to federally incarcerated women in Canada while my interviews provided me with a deeper look at the emotional and psychological impacts of arts programs. They also gave me more insight on the Pros and Cons program that operates out of several institutions for men and women in Ontario.

*Semi-Structured Interviews*

My interviews were a very important process in this research. While not my primary investigative method, the insights and data that I was able to collect provided a great deal of positive insight into how arts-based programs are run out of a federal institution. The interviews surrounded specific details on one specific music program for federally sentenced women. I conducted two one-on-one semi-structured interviews for this project, and while both participants wished to be named in this thesis, due to confidentiality limitations set out in my Research Ethics Board Application, I have opted to give both them and their program pseudonyms.

The first interview was with Jeff, the founder of the Prison Music Project. The Prison Music Project is conducted out of a number of institutions in Ontario, including the Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI) in Kingston, Ontario. My second interview was with the Prison Music Project's mentor and electronic music producer, Sam, who works more closely with the women at GVI, helping them to write songs and produce and mix their own work. Both of these

interviews were conducted via phone in late February 2019. My application was approved by the KPU REB in January 2019, and my thesis supervisor and I set upon constructing a more in-depth interview guide that would be tailored to our prospective participants. These included questions on the capacity of each program, administrative/bureaucratic challenges faced by program facilitators, their relationships with CSC, their relationships with the women in the program, the artistic process that each woman underwent, etc.

*Participant Recruitment*

I chose purposive sampling as my primary sampling and recruitment method. I felt that this sampling method was appropriate as I had a very small population of potential participants to work from given that this particular field is quite small and research is limited. My participants were individuals who had in-depth experience working as program creators, mentors and facilitators in a women's federal institution in Ontario. Initially, I had only planned to interview one program facilitator who was identified by both myself and my supervisor, Dr. Tara Lyons. From my review of the literature as well as the data I received from CSC, I knew that Jeff was the founder of the Prison Music Project, and his contact information is available on his website. I reached out to him via email on February 18, 2019 with a recruitment email that outlined the purpose of my research, the approximate length of the interview, data sharing and storage (that it would only be shared with my thesis supervisor), and offered to answer any questions that he may have had about the project before the interview began. He responded the same day, I emailed him a copy of the informed consent form, received it back signed via email, and we arranged to speak later that week.

Initially, I had only planned to interview Jeff for this project – however, at the end of our interview, he offered to connect me with Sam in order to give me a better insight on the experiences of the women in the program. So, rather accidentally, I had to incorporate snowball sampling techniques into my recruitment method. Sam, I came to understand via my interview with Jeff, works more frequently and more closely with the women at GVI, helping them to write songs and produce their own music. I was told that due to this, Sam may have a better understanding of what it was like to work with the women in the Prison Music Project and was better able to answer the gender-specific questions that I had regarding the program and arts programs for women.

Jeff generously provided me with Sam's contact information and connected us via email. I sent Sam a very similar recruitment email to Jeff, tweaking a few details that were more appropriate to Sam's work and experience as a program mentor. I received an email back the same day, sent an informed consent form that was signed and sent back to me within 24 hours. An interview was conducted February 24, 2019.

*Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria*

Initially, when constructing my interview guides, I planned to interview two groups of individuals. The first group was formerly incarcerated adult women (or women identifying) who had experience participating in an arts-based prison program in a federal prison. I excluded currently incarcerated women as gaining access to them within the timeframe of this project would be next to impossible. I excluded women who had been incarcerated provincially, as I came to understand that there are little to no programs offered for women at the provincial level. I also excluded formerly incarcerated men as there is already research available on programs for

men and my primary interest for this project is the experiences of women. While men's programming and research on arts programs for men provided an excellent starting point for this particular project, it is not the focus.

The second group of prospective participants that I wished to recruit were program developers, mentors, and program facilitators who had created or run an arts program for incarcerated women. The program developers and facilitators could be any gender, as long as they had direct experience working with incarcerated women. I excluded corrections staff, as gaining access to interviews with them would be time consuming and difficult and I felt that they would not be able to provide the information that I was looking for. Program facilitators, mentors, and program developers would provide me with the most detail on how arts programs are run, how they are funded, how they are received by prisoners and CSC staff, and how they function to help rehabilitate and transform the prisoners who participate in them. Therefore, their input was more valuable to this project.

*Interview Approach*

I decided to employ a semi-structured interview method, as it would allow me to ask follow-up questions based on the participant's answers to the initial questions in my interview guide, allow the participants room to elaborate and provide examples that would allow for richer data, and give participants the opportunity to pass on certain questions that they could not answer or did not feel comfortable answering. I wanted the interview to feel like a conversation between two people - yet still hit all of the points that I wanted to hit in order to gain more insight into the Pros and Cons program. I focused on questions surrounding women, gaining access to CSC, working with prisoners (women, specifically), and the artistic process. I wanted to focus on these

questions in particular in order to fill in the gaps that I noticed during my analysis and coding of the program guides from CSC. Some of the questions asked from my interview guide included:

1) How did you come to be involved in arts programs for prisoners?
2) Did the women have reservations about opening up or sharing their work? How did you handle this?
3) Is there anything that you feel women prisoners need in particular? Are their needs different than the men's population that you worked with?

As previously stated, I conducted two of these semi-structured interviews, both with similar questions. Both participants were interviewed via phone, as that method was easiest for them given their busy schedules. The phone interviews were conducted in the mornings, while I was alone at my apartment in order to ensure that no one could overhear the conversation. The phone calls were recorded with consent of the participants, and each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, focusing on topics surrounding their work with incarcerated women, the relationships with CSC staff, any difficulties starting up the program, and how they felt as program developers the program had changed or transformed the women that they worked with. It was important for me, as a researcher, to make both of my participants feel as comfortable as one could during a phone interview. As both participants knew one another quite well, I made notes comparing their answers to the similar questions in order to determine similarities or differences between responses.

These interviews were minimal risk as I did not ask for specific information regarding particular prisoners, nor was I interested in asking questions centred around traumatic experiences or specific criminal activity regarding the prisoners that participants worked with. Therefore, it was rather easy to avoid sensitive issues. However, due to the fact that these

interviews are semi-structured, I continued to keep in mind that these sensitive issues may crop up. To mitigate any potential risk, both participants were provided with counselling resources on the informed consent form and encouraged to keep in touch with me after the interview was completed should they have any questions or concerns.

One of the major ethical concerns I initially had was keeping the confidentiality of the participants. I made sure to include confidentiality in the informed consent form as well as reiterate it verbally after the interview was over. This was to ensure that that both participants knew that they had the option to remain confidential and that their identities and information would only be known to myself and my supervisor. Despite the fact that both declined to remain confidential, I chose to give them and their program pseudonyms. Sam stated that getting the word out about the program was crucial as there was little to no media coverage on these types of arts programs for prisoners, and the opportunity to shed light on arts programs was crucial to their continued growth and success. I was also concerned with confidentiality of the interview itself and ensuring that nobody else overheard the conversation. This is why I chose to conduct the interview in my own home, which is a private space where I could ensure that privacy was maintained.

The interviews were coded thematically, and I used open coding in order to find themes in the transcripts. Both interviews were coded by hand with highlighters and pencil, first looking for one over-arching theme to a quote or a portion of the interview. Initially, I coded for themes like “artistic process”, as I felt that that was important in order to gain more insight into how the program functioned and how the mentors worked with each individual prisoner. I also coded for themes like views of women, gender, funding, and relationships (this produced many different themes and subcodes). I felt that these themes were crucial to code for as I knew little about how

these programs are funded. I did not know, for example, if CSC funds these programs or if there are third parties that provide funding to program developers who then approach CSC with their proposed project. The program guides and program descriptions I obtained from CSC were not clear on this, and the interviews gave me a little bit more insight into the funding process.

When coding for a broad theme like “relationships” – I created subcodes, including “prisoner-mentor relationship”, “attitudes toward CSC staff”, “prisoner relationships with one another”, “mentor relationships with CSC staff”, etc. These codes provided me with a clearer picture on how the prisoners and mentors interacted, how program developers spoke about the women they worked with, how prisoners interacted with one another in the program, etc. After the over-arching themes were coded, I read through the data again in order to look for sub-codes. Once this was complete, all of the codes and the quotes/pieces of text assigned to them were transferred into a word document to allow for a clearer picture of certain themes that had emerged from the coding process. I was able to connect some of the themes and codes that I found in my interview transcripts to themes and codes gathered from my program data from CSC. Many of the themes centred around the absence of women in arts-based prison programming, how women are discussed (or not discussed) in program outlines and by program developers, and just how important it is to have arts programs for women in prison. These themes, as well as some others, will be discussed in the following chapter.

## Findings

This project, along with my investigative methods, allowed for a glimpse into arts-based programming options for incarcerated women. It also allowed me to look at the benefits of art in prisons, the emotional and psychological impact of these programs and both prisoners and the program facilitators. These methods not only helped me to answer my research question, they opened my eyes to things that are missing from arts programming, including the way that CSC views and talks about incarcerated women and their specific needs. Several themes emerged from my data analysis and will be explored in this discussion chapter. The first theme to be explored is the absence of women in corrections and the “cut and paste” nature of CSC program guides. The second theme was Indigenous arts programming for women. The third theme I uncovered was the impact of arts programming on incarcerated women and the benefits that they have gained from participating.

### *Language Choices: Correctional Services Canada’s Program Guides*

It is my understanding that the program guides I obtained and analyzed from CSC were meant to be internal documents that could be understood by government workers, government officials, and CSC staff. However, in these program guides, CSC frequently uses internal correctional “jargon” that can be difficult to translate without the help of a lexicon. Luckily, such

a lexicon exists on the CSC website (Correctional Services Canada, 2017) and this tool became incredibly useful to me during my analysis.

When analyzing these documents, I frequently had to refer to a page on CSC’s website that outlined certain acronyms and abbreviations and make notes of the full names of these acronyms and abbreviations during the coding process. Many of the acronyms referred to different prisons and positions within the hierarchy of corrections. This lexicon allowed for a deeper understanding of the primary locations of the specific arts programs I was analyzing, the specific staff involved in overseeing these programs, and which programs were offered to women in specific security unites in the prison (Correctional Services Canada, 2017). Decoding this correctional jargon was not the only issue that I encountered during the analysis portion of these documents. Frequently, I encountered inconsistency in the language used, specifically the language surrounding the women and how they were discussed within these documents.

In many of the documents, words like “patient” and “inmate” were used interchangeably. I have noted that this may be due to the program guide being altered to fit CSC’s program standards and tailor it specifically to a prison population. Interestingly, I noticed on the music therapy document was an amendment at the top of the document that stated, “If there is a discrepancy between the wordings of any documents that appear on the list, the wording of the document that first appears on the list has priority over the wording of any document that subsequently appears on the list.” (Correctional Services Canada, December 18, 2018, p. 6). These substitutions as well as this amendment matter in terms of analysis because, despite there being an amendment on the document itself telling the reader which words have priority, it still leads to confusion when reading. It also lends credence to the fact that these programs, while

beneficial, are not altered to include the needs of women, women's criminality/criminalization, women's offending – nor are these documents modified to even mention women.

*Left Out: The Absence of Women and the Discussion of Women*

One of the primary issues I discovered when analyzing the documents that I received from Correctional Service Canada was the absence of discussion of women and women's needs. While it was implied that these program guides and descriptions were geared toward women, as those were the documents that I requested, I found it difficult to find the word "women" in the documents themselves. CSC referred to the women primarily, as "inmates", "offenders", "individuals", or "participants". In fact, only two documents (a document on a photography program and a document on an expressive art therapy program) used the word "women". One document discussing a music therapy program used the words "female offenders" and "clients" interchangeably. Many of the documents also appeared clinical in nature, which I found was a common characteristic of these program guides. The women are not spoken about with any sense of compassion, there is no mention of what incarcerated women need – or the issues that they experience that have led to their incarceration.

I took note of the fact that none of the documents I had access to discussed the needs of women - or even how these programs would help the women participating address or even overcome many of the issues that led to their incarceration. The only document that mentioned the needs of incarcerated women was the document that outlined the specifics of the music therapy program. In this document, I encountered the term "Intensive Intervention Strategy"; the music therapy program itself is described as:

> *Contributes to the Intensive Intervention Strategy by addressing the needs of female offenders in the Structured Living Environment and the Secure Unit, primarily a high risk high needs population as a result of the several factors noted that music therapy is used to treat. The Structured Living Environment offers immediate mental health care thus the majority of the clients experience some form of mental health issues.* (Correctional Services Canada, 2018, p.3)

This is the only document that mentions the needs of women, however, it does not detail what those needs are. There was also no definition for the terms “Intensive Intervention Strategy”, “Structured Living Environment”, and “Secure Unit” in the document, so I referred to the online lexicon found on the official CSC website. “Intensive Intervention Strategy” is defined as:

> "A management strategy that addresses the risk and needs of women inmates who are classified as maximum security and/or have mental health needs within women offender institutions/units. The Intensive Intervention Strategy provides parameters for operations and interventions that work collaboratively with health policies and procedures in order to support the diverse needs of inmates who are classified as maximum security or have mental health needs. It includes specialized accommodation options (Structured Living Environment, Secure Unit, and Assiniboine Unit at the Regional Psychiatric Centre) and a supportive framework for inmates residing outside those specialized accommodations." (Correctional Services Canada, 2017).

The Structured Living environment was defined as, “a treatment option for minimum and medium security women with significant cognitive limitations or mental health concerns in order

that their needs can be met at the regional facilities” (Correctional Services Canada, 2013). The Secure Unit is defined by CSC as:

> “Ensure the safe and humane custody of women, respecting their rights and entitlements under the law; Promote change in the women's behaviours and coping skills that will allow them to safely integrate to lower level security; and, integrate where possible, separate when necessary (i.e., integrate with the main institution, for example, facilitate attendance at programs in the main institution when the woman's individual risk assessment determines the risk of such integration is assumable)” (Correctional Services Canada, 2013).

Both of these units appear to be medium and minimum units, leaving the women in maximum security units severely lacking arts programs.

It was noted in the document that music therapy is used to treat some of the mental health and personal issues that are outlined in this definition. However, the document does not explain or clarify how these issues are specifically treated within the music program. I found that this echoed much of what the literature on feminist criminology had discussed: Women, when not discussed as victims; when not demonized by both society and the justice system, remain largely absent from discussions around offending. This includes discussions surrounding their specific needs, their vulnerability, and the specific issues that contribute to their criminalization and incarceration. The program also did not discuss how participation would impact or improve the overall experience of incarceration, as the carceral space is dehumanizing and adds to trauma already experienced by the prisoner. The definition did not define what these specific risks and needs are, and one can only assume that they are unique to each woman. This will be further explored in the discussion chapter.

I discovered through the course of my interviews that language and views surrounding women’s incarceration and around women who offend is particularly problematic even for program mentors and facilitators who work with incarcerated women on a daily basis. Some of the phrases used by one mentor in particular were deeply gendered and could be seen as patronizing to the women they worked with in the music program. During one interview, a participant was discussing the work ethic and artistic process of the prisoners.

*if they’re good girls and the work is going well…we just really focus on that.* (Sam)

Upon transcribing and analyzing the interview, the phrase “if they’re good girls” struck me as infantilizing, misogynistic, and problematic, particularly for someone running a program and working directly with incarcerated women. It also indicated to me that there is a significant power dynamic between the program mentor and the women participating, and this dynamic could negatively affect some of the women participating. When Sam discussed some of the lyrics that the women would write, the work was referred to as “doggerel”. Doggerel is defined as “bad verse traditionally characterized by clichés, clumsiness, and irregular meter. It is often unintentionally humorous” (Poetry Foundation, 2019). During the interview, Sam mentioned that many of the women came in to the program with little to no creative writing experience, let alone expertise in lyricism. During the interview, the women were criticized for not being as sophisticated as lyrics written by a trained, musical professional.

*...you have to have a certain kind of special optimism that I seem to possess to look at this stuff and imagine it turning into something that's actually going to be like art, but most of the time I'm -- they're very open to constructive criticism. I'm like "Well, you can't say..." - the number of times I've seen not literally but "climb every mountain" or "ain't no mountain high*

> *enough" - like, people who don't know how to write songs go for the cliché again and again and again and over and over and over again…* (Sam)

If a program mentor who is responsible for coaching and working with women who have little to no experience in writing or performing speaks about their creativity and willingness to be vulnerable in such a negative manner, how can the women participating expect to feel safe? These attitudes have the potential to drive a wedge between the women and the mentor.

Sam indicated to me that many of the prisoners have a deep mistrust of authority, and this mistrust could seep into relationships with program facilitators and mentors and lead to some of the women not being as open in their artistic work. At one point in the interview, Sam spoke about not being thanked by the women they worked with. I came to understand that Sam spent approximately 40 to 50 hours editing and mixing tracks that the women had recorded. However, this desire to be thanked by the women further indicated a negative power dynamic between the women and the program facilitator that could affect the women’s sense of artistic freedom and personal development.

The Prison Music Project began as a program that was run out of a men’s prison. It has quickly expanded to women’s institutions in Ontario. However, both Sam and Jeff were able to lend a bit of insight into the experiences they had in a women’s prison and the women’s response to the program. Unfortunately, I was not able to learn much about what exactly incarcerated women need in prison in order to thrive outside of prison. There was talk of the women needing compassion and empathy from Sam and Jeff in regard to what incarcerated women need, but how do we place those somewhat intangible concepts into programming that truly affects and helps to change these women’s lives? Interestingly, Jeff told me that he believed that many of the

women needed intervention both inside and outside of the prison system, particularly when it comes to access to social services that could have an impact on incarceration and criminalization.

> *I recognize that a lot of women are there because of their domestic situations. So, I would say, as with everything, it lends it out to social services outside prison as much as inside. I think…studies understanding the domestic premises that cause women to be incarcerated would do a great deal to keep women out of prison who have no reason to be there.* (Jeff)

This comment is somewhat telling with regards to women's criminality, as well as the issues that keep them cycling in and out of the prison system. These, often violent, factors that lead to the criminalization and incarceration of women were not mentioned in the documents that I obtained from CSC, and only mentioned in this portion of the interview. Briefly, one program guide discussed mental health issues, but did not touch on the domestic violence or other traumatic experiences that may have impacted the incarceration of women and led to their criminalization. None of the documents discussed Indigenous women and the factors that lead to their overrepresentation in the prison system.

*Indigeneity and Indigenous Women*

With Indigenous women making up approximately 40% of the total Canadian prison population (Zinger, 2017), I expected to find Indigenous-specific programming – and I did. Specifically, there were two programs that catered to the cultural and traditional needs of Indigenous prisoners, and also engaged in traditional Indigenous methods of healing. However, along with discovering these programs, I made note of the words "mandate" and "requirement" that CSC chose to use in their descriptions of these programs – these two words were absent from the other program guides and descriptions. While it is positive that CSC has these mandated

programs, the fact that these programs must be mandated reflects a pervasive theme in intersectionality: that women of colour – in this case, Indigenous women, their needs, and their traumas are historically ignored – and when programming *does* become available, it is not accessible to all Indigenous women. Instead, the system picks and chooses who is "worthy" of specific types of programming.

According to Monchalin (2016), this lack of programming not only affects arts-based Indigenous healing programs, but all types of Indigenous healing programs and initiatives. Monchalin states that under section 81, CSC has the ability to come together with Indigenous communities to determine the specific type of care and programming that Indigenous offenders require. However, there have been problems with these sections, particularly issues dealing with accessibility, demand, and availability of these healing initiatives for Indigenous prisoners (Monchalin, 2016).

The two Indigenous-specific programs that I discovered were the Pathways program, an Elder-led/Elder-driven healing program for Indigenous prisoners. The purpose of the program was to teach visual arts – in this case watercolour painting – as a form of art therapy and reconnection with one's own Indigenous identity, culture, and traditions. The second program that I encountered was a regalia-making program for Indigenous women that was led and supervised by Indigenous elders and Aboriginal Liaison Officers (ALO) on a rotating basis. In this program, 10 women spent 3 hours per week (5:30pm to 8:30pm on Thursdays) learning to bead and make traditional Indigenous regalia. The program goes into the specific tasks stating that the women focused on making:

> *ribbon skirts, sweat lodge regalia, alter clothes for personal bundles and drum bags and rattle bags for cultural ceremonies and traditional circles at GVIW and when going out for*

> *UTA's and cultural ETA's such as Pow Wow's, ceremonies, and medicine picking.*
>
> (Correctional Services Canada, December 18, 2018, p. 7)

Again, the documents did not specify what UTA and ETA meant, so it was up to me to locate these definitions during data analysis. UTA stands for Unescorted Temporary Absence; ETA stands for Escorted Temporary Absence. Both ETA’s and UTA’s must be applied for by prisoners who have already served part of their sentence. The CSC website states, “Temporary absences may be granted for medical, administrative, community service, family contact, parental responsibility, personal development (rehabilitation), or compassionate reasons” (Correctional Services Canada, 2014). However, both of these temporary absences are never granted to women in maximum security units unless there are very specific circumstances (i.e. medical emergencies). The wording of this program suggests that it is only meant for women in medium and minimum-security units.

Many of the women were recruited from the Pathways program, general population, or the Level 3 Secure Unit in the prison. Information on the Level 3 Secure Unit was not available in the initial document I received from CSC. Upon looking up its definition, it appears to be a minimum-security unit for women who do not exhibit violent behaviour or any other behaviour or mental health issues. I would argue that Indigenous women in higher security units are being denied access to valuable Indigenous-based programming and healing methods when they could benefit from them just as much – if not more – than women who are housed in lower security units. No information was provided on programming for women in maximum or medium security units.

The Pathways program and the regalia-making program were the only two that were being offered to incarcerated Indigenous women. The main question that must be asked is, if

Indigenous women make up such a massive percentage of the overall prison population, why is there such a lack of arts programming for them? Second, why aren't alternative programs and traditional avenues of healing for Indigenous women being further explored by CSC? My interviews did not provide indication of Indigenous women participating in the program. I must admit, it was a failure on my part not to include more questions surrounding Jeff and Sam's experiences with Indigenous women - and this lack of programming and lack of awareness surrounding the needs of Indigenous women will be further discussed in my discussion chapter.

*Program Impact and the Power of Art in Prison*

One of the main themes that came to light during my analysis was the positive impact of arts programs on incarcerated women. During my interviews, both Jeff and Sam were very clear that their program – and arts programming in general – provided a safe and positive space for the women they worked with to explore art and express themselves without fear of judgement or ridicule. This was in direct contrast to the prison environment, where, as Jeff remarked:

> *...you keep your head down...you really have to suffer in silence - often because you've victimized other people, so you don't feel you have the right to own any feelings*. (Jeff)

Arts programs provide a safe and healthy way for prisoners to work through those feelings and directly combat the restrictive, lonely, and isolating nature of incarceration. One participant stated that many of the women who came into the music program were guarded and very private when first participating. This is most likely due to the isolating and violent nature of being in a prison. However, after a few sessions, he found that the women slowly began to open up and described an incredible emotional shift where the women could suddenly have a safe and supportive place to work through their intense emotional trauma. While arts programs may not

have the means to heal these issues directly, they certainly provide a safe, creative, emotional outlet for the women involved to work through and ruminate on the factors that led to their incarceration. Through art, they may begin to find a way to heal.

One of the main themes that I discovered through conducting and analyzing my interviews was that prisoner enthusiasm and excitement surrounding the Prison Music Project was extremely high. Sam indicated that the women they worked with were very eager to get their ideas down on paper and to record songs. In fact, prisoner enthusiasm for the Prison Music Project is currently so high that Sam is actually having to turn women away because they do not have the time to take on more participants. This indicates to me that there are not enough mentors working in this program. I was not able to determine if this was due to a funding issue or an issue of the program developer and the program facilitator being unable to find more artists to work with the women. While having a high enthusiasm rate amongst prisoners is excellent for the program, it also speaks to the need for additional arts programming for incarcerated women. Sam indicated to me that the Prison Music Project is looking to expand to more prisons as CSC is both excited and enthusiastic about the program's impact.

Overall, the Prison Music Project has led to a positive relationship between CSC and the Prison Music Project. Internal emails between CSC staff and emails between upper level CSC staff and Jeff indicate a great deal of enthusiasm for this particular program. CSC crafted a press release for the release of the Prison Music Project's first prisoner-created album and hosted the official album release party at GVI. Internal emails between the warden at GVI and other higher-level CSC staff indicated that the staff were enthusiastic about the program expansion as well as allowed prisoners to learn to mix their own music on computers that would be provided by the

institution. These same emails also indicated that CSC is considering the possibility of allowing ex-prisoners to come back into the institution to work as mentors with current prisoners who are writing and recording music, as a kind of peer-to-peer support system. The enthusiasm for this program from CSC came as a surprise, but the fact that higher-level staff are so incredibly supportive of this program suggests that CSC can be open to these kinds of alternative arts programs. In fact, I learned that they are funding another program that Sam will be running in the near future. However, much of the Prison Music Project’s funding comes from the David Rockefellar Fund, an organization that has donated substantial amounts of money to arts-based initiatives in the criminal justice system. I must note that financial and professional support from CSC may mean that both Jeff and Sam are less critical – or less willing to be critical of CSC as an institution and the way that some of the women still view and distrust correctional staff. Due to this, one of my main questions is, do they make this support of CSC known to the women in the program and do the women feel safe and supported if they have a negative experience with a guard or a higher-level staff member?

As previously mentioned, during my interview with Sam, I was told that many of the women involved in the Prison Music Project were suspicious of, and often, did not trust or respect many of the guards in the institution.

> *I don't know if you know this, the slang for prison guard is "screw" and the reason they're called "screws" is because prisoners believe that the only thing prison guards are interested in doing is screwing the prisoners out of stuff. Screwing them out of their exercise time or screwing them out of their pens and paper and…the warden has personally told me that there are lots and lots of bad people working for corrections and they do become prison guards, but there are a lot of prison guards who are really cool people too, so there's a lot of conflict.*

While I was able to gain insight into how the prisoners viewed much of the guards, both Sam and Jeff were not especially critical of the staff, save for this example. Jeff was sympathetic of many of the staff, telling me that the guards had difficult jobs and that relationships between staff and prisoners could be strained because “the inmate over-identifies with victimhood or oppression inside of the system” (Jeff, personal interview, 2019). The staff may face challenges in their jobs, however, an article from the John Howard Society indicates that correctional staff have been frequently accused of abusing their power. The article states that, despite official recommendations, there is still a suicide epidemic occurring in Canadian prisons (John Howard Society, 2017); guards are still frequently accused of favouring physical abuse over de-escalation tactics (John Howard Society, 2017). While it is beneficial that CSC is so supportive of the Prison Music Project, analyzing the transcripts has led me to believe that this support may have created some bias on the parts of both mentors when it comes to being critical of CSC staff.

With regards to impact on the women participating in the Prison Music Project, Sam indicated that all of the women they worked with had either been transferred to another prison or had been released into the community after participating. This speaks to a high success rate, but possibly that only women close to release are eligible to participate. The Prison Music Project has had very positive impact on the women participating in the program, and the women in the program not only learn how to write and compose music, they also learn how to communicate both creatively and professionally. They learn other practical skills like mixing and working with computers; these skills can be transferred into life outside of prison after the women are released. Sam noted that one woman who is learning how to mix and arrange tracks spoke about how necessary it was to have programming like the Prison Music Project in the prison.

It is important to note the relationships between the women in the Prison Music Project, as that was another theme that emerged as I was analyzing data. Both Jeff and Sam indicated to me that all of the women were very close, much closer than the men that they had worked with in other institutions. This closeness and camaraderie, Jeff told me, meant that the writing process and the emotional work done in the program came faster and easier for the women than it did for the men. Jeff told me that the closeness between the women provides a foundation for a safe, supportive environment where the women can "try and fail safely" (Jeff, personal interview, February 2019). By creating this environment, the women are more at ease and more comfortable sharing some of the more personal; more emotional parts of their songwriting. Jeff's overall goal is to create a safe and secure space for the women to grow, both emotionally and psychologically.

*Funding*

One of the main issues that I wanted to explore was how arts-based programming is funded. The data collected from the CSC documents did not give me any information on whether or not the programs that they were offering were being funded internally through CSC, through grants, or through non-profits. In almost all of the programming guides, some of the equipment was provided by the institution, but program developers and contractors were also responsible for bringing in additional equipment (instruments, arts materials, textiles, etc.) that had to be approved by the Manager of Intensive Intervention Strategy (MIIS) beforehand (Correctional Service Canada, 2018, p. 7). Other than this information, there was no mention of funding in any of the documents.

My interviews gave me further insight into program funding as well as how program mentors and facilitators are paid. During my interview with Sam, it was mentioned that Jeff was the person who, primarily, sought out funding from different organizations and charities. However, much like Predergast’s article on the William Head on Stage program, funding for the Prison Music Project is never guaranteed as it comes from external sources, and said funding varies from year to year. This was indicated to me by Sam’s comment:

> *I'm sure he told you he gets funding from the David Rockefellar fund and, um, the David Rockefellar fund hasn't quite signed on this year, um, you know we're not really sure what's going to happen next and I'm working for free, which is not that unusual in this line of business…* (Sam)

Sam also mentioned that there is little to no financial compensation for the work done in the Prison Music Project, and that CSC is not compensating Sam or Jeff or their work in this specific program. They are compensating Sam for work in a separate arts program at the same institution that has just started. However, when it comes to the Prison Music Project, Sam indicated there is approximately 40 to 50 hours of work per week; all of it currently unpaid labour.

> *I have three sites running right now…two of those, I'm not being paid for, so you just do that and you just sort of keep going and hope that you can borrow money.* (Sam)

This lack of funding and not knowing where funding is coming from seems to be stressful on Sam in particular. Sam discussed with me that they actually had to borrow money from Jeff in order to pay their bills. The fact that CSC does not seem to have a problem with this and views Sam and Jeff’s time as well as the effort put into this program as volunteer work is

concerning, particularly due to the fact that Sam is spending 40 to 50 hours a week working for no financial compensation.

Overall, the Prison Music Project has been a massively successful endeavor. It has created enthusiasm and support of both CSC staff and prisoners that has allowed both Jeff and Sam to expand to more prisons and have a positive impact on the lives of the prisoners participating. The women involved in the program are able to find a safe and supportive environment amongst one another where they can express their creativity without fear of judgement or ridicule from their fellow prisoners. However, it must be recognized that CSC’s professional and financial support of the program may have an impact on the mentor’s attitudes toward CSC as an institution and may blind them to some of the more significant abuses of power that exist between correctional staff and prisoners.

**Discussion**

Incarcerated women face issues like domestic violence, physical and sexual trauma, intergenerational trauma stemming from the impact of colonialism, mental health issues, a lack of social services (particularly if they are Indigenous), and substance abuse (Comack, 2018). The carceral space itself can add to this trauma and actually impact prisoners psychologically, physically, and emotionally. It can shape their psychologies as well as their bodies to match and reflect the confined and violent environment (Frigon & Shantz, 2014). Prisoners become shut down as a result of this space. These issues are crucial to understanding women’s offending, women’s experiences in prison, and how programming can be tailored to help incarcerated women address and begin to heal the trauma that they have experienced, both in and outside of prison. We must also understand that culturally appropriate programming for Indigenous women needs to become more of “the norm” in terms of prison programming. Allowing Indigenous women to drum, sing, and express their trauma creatively in a culturally appropriate space can be incredibly transformative and beneficial to their healing.

Arts programs are also essential to meeting and fulfilling the needs of women while they are inside in order to provide them with emotional and psychological healing as well as tangible skills that can improve their chances of success once they are released. While some of the program guides, specifically the guide on music therapy, outlined some benefits of the program,

none of them were specific to prisoners or specific to women. Many of the programs that I analyzed were not only guilty of not addressing women's needs, but many of them appeared to be "cut and paste" programs that were possibly taken from men's programming. They may have been simply applied to women without considering women's experiences at all. While my interviews attempted to focus more on women, many of the answers I received reflected feminist theory's critique of certain attitudes toward women offenders, particularly, the idea that women who offend are "bad" or "damaged" in some way. The way that the women were spoken about during the course of my interviews suggested that Sam and Jeff do not fully take the issues and traumas of incarcerated women into account and often infantilize them as "good girls". These attitudes and lack of care regarding women's issues are equally reflected in the CSC documents where the word "women" is only mentioned three times.

Despite being programs "for women", the programs in the documents that I have obtained from CSC do not appear to take women into consideration. In fact, CSC's attitude appears to be that if it works for men, it will work for women. On a certain level, that may be true, but due to the fact that incarcerated women experience a multitude of factors that lead to their criminalization - including, but not limited to: sexual abuse, domestic abuse, lack of access to social services (especially if they are Indigenous), drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and poverty – it is important that programming reflects and considers these issues that criminalize women and works on providing women with the emotional and practical skills that they need to heal and transform while incarcerated. This is particularly important for Indigenous women who experience the ongoing effects of colonization.

With regards to the Indigenous-specific programming that I was able to locate via my ATI Request, I was only able to find two programs for Indigenous women. This lack of

programming for a booming prison population is deeply disappointing, and it is even more disappointing to see that both programs are only offered to women in medium and minimum-security units. The lack of access for women in maximum and medium security units reflects intersectionality theory as the security classification of Indigenous women reflects who gets what type of programming – or any programming at all. Indigenous women in higher security units who experience mental health issues, and Indigenous women in maximum security units whose offences and criminality reflects a history of trauma rooted in colonial violence are in just as much need of these programs as women in minimum and medium security units. The fact that CSC does not have traditional Indigenous arts-based programming for these women reflects intersectionality theory and the ongoing systemic racism that Indigenous women in the prison system experience. It also suggests that by only offering these two programs to women in medium and minimum security units, the state remains the sole decider of who is "worthy" (and in this case, "well-behaved" enough) to participate in these types of therapeutic programs that put Indigenous women back in touch with traditions that have been violently stolen from them through the process of colonialism. Part of this is reflected in both Elizabeth Comack's and Lisa Monchalin's works on Indigenous women and the justice system.

Comack openly criticizes the criminal justice system and its harsh penalties for Indigenous women. Often, the incarcerated women that Comack interviewed during the course of her research for her book had come from abusive backgrounds or had friends and family members who "are counted among the many missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada" (Comack, 2018, p. 27). These factors are also reflected in Monchalin (2016)'s work on Indigenous women and incarceration. Indigenous women have experienced intergenerational trauma as a result of residential schools, systemic racism, and the sixties scoop. All of these

factors lead to their criminalization and subsequent overrepresentation in the prison system (Comack, 2018; Monchalin, 2016). Through access to Indigenous-based programming, including arts programs, incarcerated Indigenous women can have a safe and supportive outlet for their traumas and heal in a culturally appropriate environment where their needs can be addressed and understood.

Comack (2018) criticized the correctional system and its treatment of Indigenous women, particularly when it comes to their overrepresentation in the prison system and access to culturally appropriate programming. She found that because prisons were overcrowded, Indigenous women did not get as much access to culturally appropriate programming (Comack, 2018). This programming was also only seemingly offered to women at the medium and minimum-security levels. During the course of my own research, I found Comack's discoveries and critiques reflected in my own findings and analysis as well as my review of the literature surrounding the incarceration of Indigenous women. There need to be more arts programs for incarcerated Indigenous women that are offered to women being held at minimum, medium, and maximum-security units – and particularly in maximum units where the psychological and emotional benefits may be the most needed. The fact that so few of these programs are offered to Indigenous women, as well as non-Indigenous women, indicate to me that there needs to be more funding put into arts-based initiatives for incarcerated women. This leads me to make several recommendations regarding arts-based programming and what could be needed in order for it to be more successful and reach more women, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

*Policy Recommendations*

It has become clear during the course of this research that funding for arts-based initiatives for incarcerated women is limited. Through my analysis of my interviews with Sam and Jeff of the Prison Music Project, a lack of funding could possibly mean that they are not able to employ more mentors to help to ease the workload and potentially reach more prisoners. With the program expanding, more funds will be needed as Sam and Jeff simply cannot do all of this work on their own. The Prison Music Project receives the bulk of its funding from sources outside of CSC, which means that every year, the program enters a state of uncertainty where neither Sam nor Jeff know where the money is going to come from – or how much they are going to receive. I encountered the same phenomenon when reading Prendergast's overview of the William Head on Stage theatre program (Prendergast, 2016). It is my recommendation that CSC begins to fund more of these programs and pay facilitators, not just so that these artists are compensated for long hours and labour performed outside of the prison, but so that more artists and mentors can be hired to work with more women. Sam mentioned that the Prison Music Project was having to turn women away because the demand for the program was so high. More funding for Indigenous-specific arts-based initiatives is equally necessary.

Howard Zinger made specific recommendations in his annual report that more funding needs to be allocated to Indigenous healing lodges and Indigenous-based programs and initiatives (Zinger, 2017). In his report, he also stated, "to honour the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 'call to action,' I recommend that CSC spending, budget and resource allocation should better reflect the proportion of Indigenous people serving a federal sentence" (Zinger, 2017). Based on the research conducted for this project, it is my recommendation that not only Indigenous-specific arts programming be expanded, but that the programs also be offered to women in maximum security units, as they can benefit from alternative forms of healing. By

offering arts programs to Indigenous women in maximum security units, we may be able to not only help them heal from trauma, it can also help them to “graduate” to the medium-security units and eventually the minimum-security units faster than they would without access to this programming.

Based on my analysis of the data, I would recommend that more women, women of colour, queer women, transgender women, and Indigenous women come in to prisons to run and lead programs in order to reflect the diversity of the prison population. I believe that this is particularly important as more diversity in terms of gender, race, and sexuality can help incarcerated women to relate to their program mentors and feel safer opening up and expressing themselves creatively. Program mentors can also help to create specific arts-based programs that help to address and overcome the trauma that incarcerated women face, as well as programming that better fits the needs of women as opposed to the “cut and paste” model that CSC has been so keen to adopt. While some incarcerated women may feel comfortable under the mentorship of a straight, white cisgender man, others may be reluctant to share due to past trauma and abuse from men. I see incorporating more diversity as an extreme benefit to incarcerated women.

Regarding the language used in program guides, I would recommend that CSC begin to incorporate the word “women”. In doing this, CSC and program developers can begin to openly discuss women’s needs and experiences as opposed to erasing them through language. Language is an extremely powerful tool and by using the word “women” as opposed to “inmate” or “offender”, program developers and mentors can help to de-institutionalize themselves and the women that they work with in order to help them separate themselves from their offence and the label of criminality. It is my belief that by doing this, both CSC and future program developers

can create and incorporate more programs that are specific to women as opposed to simply re-shaping programs designed for men and putting them into action in women’s spaces.

*Limitations*

This specific project focuses on the types of arts programming that is currently available to incarcerated women in Canada. During the course of this research, I was able to touch on several key themes, including how arts programs impact women. However, despite my findings, I must acknowledge that there are limitations to this research. I only received a handful of documents through my ATI request with CSC and the sample size for my interviews was very small as I found it difficult to find individuals with experience in running arts-based prison programs. The data that I was able to collect is beneficial for the exploratory research that I have conducted and allowed me to find out how arts programs work, how many are being offered to women in federal institutions, how arts programs are funded, and how they impact the women participating in them. I believe that the data that I have collected and analyzed answered my research question and allowed me to explore several key themes that came out of my analysis. However, given the small amount of data and the small sample size, I recognize that the generalizability of this research is limited. I hope to continue to expand upon this research in the course of my graduate studies.

## Conclusion

While much of the literature and research surrounding arts programming in prisons has been largely positive, these programs remain largely ignored and under-funded. The research on arts-based prison programming states that when prisoners engage in creative expression, they are able to develop healthy communication skills, relationships with peers and mentors, a reduction in disciplinary infractions and recidivism rates, and can even provide prisoners with tangible skills that can translate into a post-prison environment and help them to gain employment (Brewster, 2014; Frigon & Shantz, 2014; Halperin et al., 2012; Moller, 2011; Prendergast, 2016).

Arts programs for women appear to be even further ignored by research and literature and that apathy has contributed to a significant gap in the literature.

The data I was able to collect via ATI requests and through interviews suggest that arts programs for incarcerated women exists, but that there are simply not enough programs to meet the demand for them. Therefore, more funding is needed in order to further expand these programs to federally sentenced women in Canada. During the course of this research, I was able to touch on several key themes including: the erasure of women from program guides about them; the lack of concern for the needs of incarcerated women; the apathetic, misogynistic, and infantilizing language in which their experiences and traumas are discussed (or in this case, not discussed); the lack of arts programs for Indigenous women; the lack of access that Indigenous women in maximum-security units. These themes have also been reflected and discussed at length within the realms of feminist criminological theory and intersectionality theory – two of the key schools of thought that were crucial to engage in throughout the course of this research.

Based on these themes as well as my findings, I have recommended that more funding be put into arts programming for women – particularly arts programming for Indigenous women. I have also recommended that more women (including women of colour, queer women, transgender women, and Indigenous women) be offered mentorship positions and the chance to work creatively with incarcerated women in order to develop programs that better suit their needs. Incarcerated women in Canada need more arts-based programming that reflects their needs, their struggles, their traumas, and helps them to find a way through it all so that they can find a way to heal and perhaps find a new kind of freedom within the confines of prison.

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