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_____ **Research Report** _____

**Assessment of the Women's Violence
Prevention Program**

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Assessment of the Women's Violence Prevention Program

Sara Rubinfeld

Anne Trinneer

Dena Derkzen

&

Kim Allenby

Correctional Service of Canada

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Executive Summary

Key words: *violent offending, violence prevention, program assessment, women offenders*

Acknowledging a need for programming that would target the needs of repeatedly violent women offenders, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) developed the Women's Violence Prevention Program (WVPP). The goal of WVPP was to help women develop lifestyles that would be incompatible with violence and would, therefore, reduce their risk to re-offend violently. The current study is an assessment of the pilot phase of WVPP.

The sample included 83 women who completed WVPP between February 2008 and November 2010. A matched comparison group of violent women offenders who did not participate in the program was identified for comparison purposes. The assessment included a pre- and post-program battery of psychometric measures, participant feedback questionnaires, an examination of immediate (e.g., institutional misconduct), and intermediate outcomes (e.g., type of release from custody).

Results of the assessment battery and participant feedback tended to reflect positively on the program. For those who completed the program, results revealed significant differences in women's scores before and after completing WVPP. Specifically, upon completing the program, there was a significant decrease in women's expression of anger, hostility, and aggression; significant increase in problem-solving and decision-making ability; and a significant decrease in criminal values and attitudes. Participant's feedback reflected positively on aspects relating to the program content, delivery, and program facilitators.

Results concerning outcome measures were less positive. A monthly rate for participation in minor and major incidents was calculated in the six months prior to program participation and six months after completing the program. These results indicate a significant increase in the rate of minor institutional misconduct from before (.27) to after (.54) programming. While there was also a noted increase in the rate of major institutional incidents (from .17 pre-program to .25 post-program), these differences were not significant.

In fiscal year 2010-11, CSC began implementing a new continuum of correctional programming for women, the Women Offender Correctional Program (WOCP) and the Aboriginal Women Offender Correctional Program (AWOCP). Each stream of programming consists of an Engagement Program, Moderate Intensity, High Intensity, and Self-Management and women complete the elements of the program based on their individual's risk and need levels (CSC, 2010b). WVPP is no longer offered to women as it has been replaced by the High intensity program. However, many of the skills, program material, and framework of WOCP and AWOCP are based upon and are similar to the WVPP.

Given the limited empirical evidence for effective violence prevention programs for women, there is a continued need to research this area. With the recent change in correctional programming for women, however, future research efforts will be focused on the new correctional programs, WOCP and AWOCP, which will include violent women offenders.

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Introduction

Over the last twenty years, there has been a growth in research and literature on women and criminal behaviour (e.g., Blanchette & Brown, 2006; Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003; Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, 1990). By recognizing that there are important differences between women and men in their lifestyles and patterns of offending, incarceration, and rehabilitation, significant advancements have been made in women's corrections. Despite these developments, however, there continues to be room for improvement in the correctional practices employed with women and the services available to women offender populations.

The general population of women offenders in recent years has grown more rapidly than the men offender population (e.g., Blanchette & Brown, 2006; Holmes, 2010). Relating specifically to violent offending, since the mid-1990's the incarceration rate for violent women offenders has increased at a greater rate than for non-violent women offenders (e.g., Bell, 2004). Bell (2004) examined admissions to Canadian federal women's institutions over a six-year period and reported greater increases in the number of women incarcerated for one-time or repeat violent offences relative to those incarcerated for non-violent offences. However, in recent years the proportion of women within each major offence category has remained stable (CSC, 2013). Currently, 55% of women are serving a sentence for a violent offence (Bottos, 2007; Public Safety, 2012), most commonly robbery and assault convictions (Bottos, 2007; Koons-Wiit & Schram, 2003; Public Safety, 2012). Given the sizable proportion of women serving time for violent offences, researchers have turned their attention to understanding their risks, needs, and the factors that contribute to their offending behaviour. Furthermore, it is essential to assess the effectiveness of treatment approaches to ensure that appropriate services are being used to reduce the risk for future violence.

Women and Violence

There are many factors associated with women's criminal behaviour. Blanchette and Brown (2006) found that women offenders' criminogenic needs tend to relate to personal/emotional aspects, such as low self-esteem and self-control, poor coping skills, mental health needs, suicide, and self-injurious behaviour. In addition, women offenders often display needs concerning limited education and employment skills, histories of abuse and victimization,

and substance abuse (Blanchette & Brown, 2006; Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003).

Although the needs of violent and non-violent women offenders are similar, specific needs tend to be elevated among violent women offenders. Evidence suggests that most women incarcerated for violent offences present with a high level of criminogenic needs, as well as a high risk to re-offend (Bell, 2004; Bottos, 2007). Women convicted of violent offences often display considerable or high levels of need relating to personal/emotional (e.g., anger management, hostility) and substance abuse domains (Bell, 2004; Bottos, 2007) and higher needs in relation to interpersonal relationships (i.e., family, partners, associates) in comparison to their non-violent counterparts (Bell, 2004). Additional risk factors among women who exhibit violent behaviour include lifetime experiences of physical and sexual victimization (Byrd & Davis, 2009), mental health concerns, particularly personality disorders (Putkonen, Komulainen, Virkkunen, et al., 2003), and backgrounds fraught with poverty, fewer educational and employment opportunities, and dysfunctional familial environments (e.g., Batchelor, 2005; Bottos, 2007).

Research has demonstrated a link between targeting criminogenic needs¹ (i.e. dynamic risk) through appropriate interventions and reducing the likelihood of recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). Conscious of the differences between women convicted of violent and non-violent offences, CSC acknowledged the operational need for programming options appropriate to violent women offenders. This type of programming actively supports the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA; 1992) legislative requirement to “provide programs designed particularly to address the needs of female offenders.”

Overview of the Women’s Violence Prevention Program

Early in 2007, CSC developed the Women’s Violence Prevention Program (WVPP), which specifically targeted repeatedly violent women offenders² (Fortin & Blanchette, 2008). The program has a number of theoretical underpinnings and is founded on evidence-based approaches commonly used with women offenders. Some of the larger concepts and theories

¹ The seven identified criminogenic need domains relate to needs in the areas of: associates; family/marital; substance use; personal/emotional; attitude; community functioning and, employment.

² Acknowledging the disproportionate number of Aboriginal women serving sentences for violent convictions (79% vs. 59% for non-Aboriginal women; CSC, 2010a), Spirit of a Warrior, a program designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal women offenders convicted of violent offences, was developed and piloted in 2002. However, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women are eligible to participate in the WVPP.

incorporated into the program content include: social learning theory (i.e., individuals are socialized differently and behaviours are learned through modelling and reinforcement; Akers, 1998); feminist ecological model (i.e., women's violence is influenced by the interactions of a variety of individual, environmental, and social factors; Ballou, Matsumoto, & Wagner, 2002; Das Dasgupta, 2002); and relational theory (i.e., women place a great deal of importance on maintaining relationships and this can either be a risk or protective factor for criminal behaviour and violence; Blanchette & Brown, 2006; Bloom et al., 2003; Miller, 1986).

The goal of the WVPP is to help women develop ways of living that are incompatible with violence and thereby reduce the likelihood that they will re-offend violently upon release. Specific program objectives are aimed at assisting women to understand the context of their violence, develop skills to promote healthy living, and develop a vision for a future without violence.

WVPP is structured as a modular program comprised of seven modules with a total of 40 sessions (Fortin & Blanchette, 2008). Modules cover topics related to understanding the context of violence, emotion management, thoughts and beliefs supportive of violence, effective communication, relationships, survival strategies, and lifestyle. In addition to the program sessions, a one-on-one initial interview is conducted with program candidates prior to beginning the program and one-on-one sessions are conducted at the end of each of the seven modules. The program is delivered by one facilitator to a maximum of eight women per group. WVPP is considered a moderate intensity program with four to six one-hour sessions delivered per week.

Current Study

The goal of the current study is to assess whether the objectives of the WVPP were achieved during the pilot phase. To do this, the current study examines participants' motivation to change, ability to identify and replace harmful beliefs and behaviours, problem-solving skills, and institutional behaviours. Also, program effectiveness was assessed by examining immediate (i.e., institutional) and intermediate (i.e., release and return to custody) outcomes. It is anticipated that program participation will positively influence participants' ability to develop ways of living that are incompatible with violence and a reduced likelihood of reoffending violently upon release.

Method

Participants

Two groups of participants were included in the current study: (1) a treatment group who participated in WVPP³ and (2) a comparison group of women who were matched on relevant characteristics but had not received WVPP. The treatment group included any women who participated in the pilot phase of the WVPP that began in February 2008. Women were considered for participation in the program if they had been involved in two or more violent incidents, either through convictions, institutional charges, or self-reports (Fortin & Blanchette, 2008).⁴

The final program cycle considered in this phase of the assessment ended in November 2010. In total, data were received for 114 participants. For various data quality issues (e.g., errors in assessment battery, participating in the program more than once), nine individuals were removed from the sample.

Given that the current study is designed to investigate changes associated with completing treatment, many analyses excluded individuals who had not completed all of the modules of the WVPP. Eighty-seven out of 114 participants completed the program. A number of reasons for early termination of the program were identified, including: suspension (e.g., segregation, increased security status; $n = 13$), withdrawal (i.e., drop-out; $n = 4$), and administrative reasons (e.g., release, transfer; $n = 5$). Combining both exclusion criteria together (incomplete assessment data and early termination), 31 participants were removed from the study and 83 participants were included in the final sample.

To draw conclusions about the effectiveness of WVPP, a matched comparison group of violent women offenders who did not participate in WVPP was identified. In order to simulate the time periods examined for the treatment group, a mock three-and-a-half-month program period was selected, beginning at the middle of the sentence.⁵ As with the treatment group, the comparison group was observed for six months before and after the program period.

³ The terms “treatment”, “intervention” and “program” are used interchangeably to represent the group that completed WVPP.

⁴ Due to differing needs and motivations for their use of violence, women convicted of violent offences against children and women involved in violent incidents as a result of self-defence were excluded from the program.

⁵ The middle of the sentence for those with an indeterminate sentence was based on a pre-determined sentence end date of May 1, 2011.

The comparison group ($n = 105$) was matched with the sample group of WVPP participants (completers and non-completers) on age, ethnicity, levels of static risk, and whether the most serious offence of the sentence was violent in nature. In addition, to ensure that each participant was incarcerated for a sufficient length of time to have a pre-treatment period (six months), a mock treatment period (three and a half months), and a post-treatment period (six months), only those women with a minimum of 18 continuous months of incarceration were eligible for selection for the comparison group. To examine intermediate outcomes, follow up analyses were conducted for the two groups of women, using data collected on March 31, 2014.

Program Participation. During the February 2008 to November 2010 timeframe, WVPP was run at the five regional women's federal institutions: Fraser Valley Institution (FVI), Abbotsford, British Columbia; Edmonton Institution for Women (EIFW), Edmonton, Alberta; Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI), Kitchener, Ontario; Joliette Institution, Joliette, Quebec; and Nova Institution for Women, Truro, Nova Scotia. National distribution of participants across the institutions, along with the number of program cycles for which data were collected, is displayed in Table 1. Compared to the distribution of the incarcerated women offender population, Nova in the Atlantic region is slightly over-represented, while EIFW in the Prairie Region is under-represented (CSC, 2010).⁶ This is likely a result of Nova returning data for the highest number of program cycles (6), as well as the fact that EIFW has a relatively high proportion of Aboriginal women and also offered an Aboriginal-specific violence program for women, Spirit of a Warrior, in the same period.

⁶ Regional distribution for incarcerated women offenders as of March 2010 was: 13% Atlantic region; 18% Quebec region; 25% Ontario region; 33% Prairie Region (which also includes Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, where WVPP was not offered); and, 12% Pacific region (CSC, 2010).

Table 1

Regional Distribution of WVPP Participants and Program Cycles per Institution

Institution	Percent (<i>n</i>)	Number of program cycles
Fraser Valley Institution	17.7 (18)	3
Edmonton Institution for Women	15.2 (16)	3
Grand Valley Institution for Women	22.9 (24)	5
Joliette	23.8 (25)	5
Nova	21.0 (22)	6

Note. Column totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Measures

Program assessment battery. An assessment battery of self-report measures was compiled in advance of launching the pilot phase of the WVPP. As detailed below, the battery contained four standardized measures and two questionnaires developed for the program by CSC. To analyze effects of the program, the battery was completed by participants before engaging in the first session of WVPP and again after completing the program.

Knowledge Questionnaire (KQ). The Knowledge Questionnaire (KQ) used in the WVPP assessment battery was developed by the Research Branch and Woman Offender Sector at CSC. The 20-item questionnaire presents a number of multiple choice and true/false questions used to assess a participant's knowledge about topics related to violence, criminal behaviour, program content, and effective coping skills and tools.

Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR). The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1991; 1998) is used to measure potential response bias on self-report measures. It consists of two subscales that measure an individual's self-deception (SD; e.g., "I rarely appreciate criticism") and impression management (IM; e.g., "I have some pretty awful habits"). Each subscale contains 20 items. Respondents rate their answers on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "not true" to "very true". For the purposes of the current assessment, focus was placed on the IM subscale, which examines the extent to which a respondent may be exaggerating or trying to impress the audience (Paulhus, 1998). Focus on the IM subscale was chosen because the goal was to use this measure as a validity check to identify respondents that may have been self-enhancing. As well, analyses of self-deception were not conducted because the internal consistency assessment for this scale was unacceptably low in the

current study (see Table 2).

Although the seven-point scale was used for the reliability analysis, the QuikScore method of scoring the Paulhus Deception Scale (PDS; Paulhus, 1998) was applied in this current study. This involves dichotomizing responses such that the two extreme scores that represent “high impression management” are recoded as “1” and all remaining scores are recoded as “0.” The BIDR has been validated with an offender population (Kroner & Weekes, 1996) and has been used with women offenders in a variety of research studies (e.g., Carney & Buttell, 2004; Irving, Taylor, & Blanchette, 2002; Mills & Kroner, 2005).

University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA). The University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA; McConaughy, Prochaska, & Velicer, 1983) measures an individual’s current stage of motivation for change. The scale consists of 32 items and responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Four stages of change are assessed: (1) *precontemplation*, when an individual is not intending to make any changes (e.g., “As far as I’m concerned, I don’t have any problems that need changing”), (2) *contemplation*, when an individual is thinking about change (e.g., “I think I might be ready for some self-improvement”), (3) *action*, when an individual has made changes to her life (e.g., “I am doing something about the problems that had been bothering me”), and (4) *maintenance*, when changes have been made and the focus is on maintaining these changes (e.g., “I’m here to prevent myself from having a relapse of my problem”). In general, the pre- and post-subcales demonstrated acceptable or good reliability (see Table 2). However, there is a trend of lower reliability in the post-measurement period. Specifically, there tends to be a greater number of weak, but negative, inter-item correlations in the post-test period. This finding may demonstrate a shifting in motivational stages such that certain elements receive strong endorsements while others do not.

The selected method of scoring the URICA involves summing each of the stage subscales and taking the highest subscale to be indicative of the participant’s current stage of change. This scale has been used previously with incarcerated women (El-Basell et al., 1998).

Table 2

Reliability Analyses for Pre- and Post-Test Battery

	Pre-Program α	Post-Program α
Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR)		
Self-Deception	0.5	0.3
Impression Management	0.8	0.8
University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA)		
Precontemplation	0.8	0.6
Contemplation	0.8	0.68
Action	0.8	0.7
Maintenance	0.6	0.6
Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ)		
Anger	0.8	0.8
Physical Aggression	0.8	0.8
Verbal Aggression	0.6	0.6
Hostility	0.8	0.8
Problem Solving Questionnaire (PSQ)		
Problem Definition & Formulation	0.8	0.8
Generation of Alternative Solutions	0.8	0.8
Decision-Making	0.8	0.8
Solution Implementation & Verification	0.7	0.8
Criminal Sentiments Scale (CSS)		
Attitude toward Law, Courts and Police	0.9	0.9
Tolerance for Law Violation	0.8	0.9
Identification with Criminal Others	0.4	0.5

Note. $n = 73-82$ (depending on subscale).

Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ). The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ: Buss & Perry, 1992) is a 29-item scale that measures individual levels of anger and hostility on four subscales: *physical aggression* (e.g., “Given enough provocation, I may hit another person”), *verbal aggression* (e.g., “I tell my friends openly when I disagree with them”), *anger* (e.g., “Sometimes I fly off the handle for no good reason”), and *hostility* (e.g., “I

am sometimes eaten up with jealousy”). Responses are given on a five-point scale ranging from “very unlike me” to “very like me” and scored to indicate an overall level of aggression, as well as aggression levels on each of the subscales. High scores indicate high levels of aggression. Cronbach’s alphas (see Table 2) indicate acceptable to good reliability for both the pre- and post-test. However, the verbal aggression subscale tends to demonstrate lower reliability, which is likely due to the fact that it is comprised of fewer items than the other subscales. The measure has previously been used with offender populations, including women (e.g., Williams, Boyd, Cascardi, & Poythress, 1996).

Problem Solving Questionnaire (PSQ). The Problem Solving Questionnaire (PSQ) is a scale developed by CSC based on the Social Problem Solving Inventory (SPSI; D’Zurilla, Nezu, & Maydeu-Olivares, 1996). It was developed for internal use to facilitate the assessment of problem solving with the women offender population. It is used to measure individuals’ thoughts, responses, and behaviours when faced with a variety of problems in everyday situations. The scale consists of 20 items with responses rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “not at all true of me” to “extremely true of me.” High scores correspond to more adaptive approaches to problem solving. In addition to a total score, the PSQ is comprised of four five-item subscales: *problem definition and formulation* (e.g., “When the outcome of my solution to a problem is not satisfactory, I usually try to find out what went wrong and then I try again”); *generation of alternative solutions* (e.g., “When I am attempting to solve a problem, I often try to be creative and think of original or unconventional solutions”); *decision-making* (e.g., “When I have a problem to solve, one of the first things I do is get as many facts about the problem as possible”); and *solution implementation and verification* (e.g., “When I am attempting to find a solution to a problem, I try to keep in mind what my goal is at all times”). Cronbach’s alpha values (see Table 2) for the sub-scales are in the acceptable to good range.

Criminal Sentiments Scale (CSS). The modified Criminal Sentiments Scale (CSS; Simourd, 1997; Wormith & Andrews, 1984) is a 41-item scale measuring an individual’s attitudes, values, and beliefs relating to criminal behaviour. The response format is a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The CSS yields an overall criminal sentiments score, as well as scores on three subscales: *law, courts, and police* (LCP; e.g., “Life would be better with fewer policemen”); *tolerance for law violation* (TLV; e.g., “A person should always obey the law no matter how much it interferes with his personal

ambitions”); and, *identification with criminal others* (ICO; e.g., “I would rather associate with people that obey the law than those that don’t”). Items were recoded so that higher scores on the TLV and the ICO subscales reflected more pro-criminal attitudes while higher scores on the LCP subscale and the entire CSS represented pro-social attitudes. In order to compute an overall scale score, the sum of the TLV and ICO subscales was subtracted from the sum of the LCP subscale.

Reliability (Table 2) on the CSS subscales is good for both the pre- and post-treatment period with the exception of the Identification with Criminal Others subscale. This finding is likely due to a combination of there being relatively few items (six items) in this subscale as well as negative associations between item 39 –“No person can violate the law and be my friend” – and most of the other scale items. In past research, variations of the CSS has been used with violent men offenders (Mills & Kroner, 1997) and with women offenders (Morgan, Fisher, Dian, Mandracchia, & Murray, 2010; Simourd, 2006).

Participant feedback. Feedback questionnaires were completed by participants at the end of each module (see Appendix A), as well as upon completing the program (see Appendix B). Modular feedback questionnaires contained 11 questions pertaining to participants’ overall impression of the content and method of delivery of each module. The post-program feedback questionnaire contained eight questions regarding participants’ experiences of the length of the program, the group dynamic, and the dynamic with the facilitator. All answers on both questionnaires were rated on a Likert scale and space was provided at the end of the questionnaire to give participants the opportunity to provide any additional comments or concerns.

Offender Management System. Additional administrative data were extracted from the offender records through the Offender Management System (OMS). These administrative data contain all computerized information pertinent to federal sentences on the date the data were captured. The data extracted contain information related to the demographics and incarceration characteristics of the women in the sample, offender intake assessment results, immediate outcome measures of security classification, segregation, and institutional adjustment and intermediate outcomes related to institutional release, and returns to custody (see Appendix C for full description of variables).

Procedure

Program assessment data were collected between February 2008 and November 2010. This timeframe allowed for a minimum of three cycles of the WVPP to be run at each of the institutions. Program facilitators had participants complete the program assessment battery prior to engaging in the program and again upon completing the program. Feedback forms were completed by participants at the end of each module, as well as upon completing the program. Facilitators then mailed the completed assessment batteries, feedback forms, and facilitator logs to the Women Offender Research Team of the Research Branch.

Results

Assessment Battery

Only those individuals who finished the program completed both pre- and post-program assessment batteries. The following is a summary of results as they relate to the various components of the assessment battery.

Knowledge Questionnaire. On average, program participants obtained significantly higher scores (out of 20) on the knowledge questionnaire after completing treatment ($M = 15.4$, $SD = 3.3$), than before treatment ($M = 13.7$, $SD = 3.3$) $t_{(74)} = -4.5$, $p < 0.0001$.

Socially Desirable Responding: Impression Management. Mean scores on the Impression Management (IM) subscale of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) were 4.3 ($SD = 3.3$) for pre-program testing and 5.5 ($SD = 3.9$) for post-program testing. These are comparable to norms provided for correctional populations ($M = 5.3$, $SD = 3.6$; Kroner & Weekes, 1996) and fall within conservative validity cut-offs (>2 , <8), indicating that on average, participants were neither faking good nor faking bad in their self-reported responses (Paulhus, 1998).

Although average scores fell within the normal range, several respondents had scores that exceeded QuickScore cut-offs for validity identification (Paulhus, 1998). To examine whether respondents who exceeded cut-offs differed significantly in their responses on the remaining portions of the assessment battery, a series of exploratory Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were conducted. In particular, three groups were compared: those who are probably “faking good” (i.e., scores greater than 8), those who are probably in the “normal range” (i.e., scores between 2 and 8) those who are probably “faking bad” (i.e., scores less than 2). In the case of pre-training scoring, none of the results reached significance after applying a Bonferroni correction ($\alpha_{0.05/16} = 0.003$). However, when applying a less conservative critical value ($\alpha = 0.05$), there was a clear pattern of higher aggression levels as measured by the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire. With the exception of the verbal aggression subscale, which does not differ across groups, post hoc (Tukey) analyses indicated that average aggression scores tend to differ between those who are faking bad and those who are faking good. That is, participants who are faking bad appear to be more aggressive than those who are faking good.

Similarly, but to a greater extent, significant differences existed between the three groups

post-training. In particular, all of the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire's subscale scores differed significantly across the three groups. In addition, subscales of the Criminal Sentiments Scale-Modified differed significantly across the three groups. For both scales, post hoc (Tukey) analyses showed that high positive impression managers tend to report significantly lower levels of aggression and fewer criminal sentiments than the other two groups.

These results imply that respondents who are faking good become more distinctive from the other two groups post-treatment. It may be that, over time, these women became more aware of the benefits of demonstrating progress in their rehabilitation. It is not possible to ascertain whether programming or the passage of time brings about this change because the battery of tests was not completed by the comparison group.

These findings also suggest that caution should be taken when interpreting the results of those who are demonstrating high levels of impression management. The extent of the impact of impression management was examined through an assessment of interaction effects (*change: pre- versus post-program X impression management: low versus normal versus high*). In the vast majority of cases, significant interaction effects were not found. Exceptions to this finding are summarized below.

Standardized Measures

University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA). The URICA was used pre- and post-program to assess participants' motivation and stage of change prior to engaging in the WVPP and upon completing the program. There was a trend toward higher levels of motivation, such that the majority of participants were categorized in the "contemplative stage" prior to programming and in the "action stage" post-programming (see Table 3).

Table 1

University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA): Pre- to Post-Program Identified Stage of Change

Stage of Change	Pre-Program % (n)	Post-Program % (n)
Pre-contemplation	--	--
Contemplation	54.9 (45)	36.6 (30)
Action	41.5 (34)	62.2 (51)
Maintenance	3.6 (3)	1.2 (1)

Note. $N = 82$; Column totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

In addition to looking at the distribution of URICA scores before and after treatment, a change score was computed. As with the earlier analysis, the URICA subscale with the highest score was taken as the most prominent stage of change. Each stage was recoded on an ordinal scale from one to four (e.g., pre-contemplation = 1 and maintenance = 4). Pre-scores were then subtracted from post-scores such that positive values represent progress to more advanced motivation for change (see Table 4). Nearly half of all participants (48%) remained at the same level. When change occurred, it tended to be to one level higher (25%) or one level lower (17%). A paired-sample t -test demonstrated that, overall, there was a trend toward significance $t_{(81)} = -1.85$, $p = 0.07$, indicating a trend toward more advanced motivations for change.

Table 2

University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA): Pre- to Post-Program Number of Stages Increased or Decreased

Change	% (n)
Decreased two stages	1.2 (1)
Decreased one stage	18.3 (15)
Remained the same	45.1 (37)
Increased one stage	34.1 (28)
Increased two stages	1.2 (1)

Note. $N = 82$; Column totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

In contrast to overall URICA scores, significant differences were found between pre- and post-program results on all remaining scales in the assessment battery. That is, participants' post-program responses differed significantly from the measures completed before programming. Pre- and post-program mean scores, as well as the results of paired-sample t-tests, are displayed in Table 5.

The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ). Participants' mean scores on all subscales of the Aggression Questionnaire decreased significantly from pre- to post-WVPP. This means that women who completed the program self-reported reduced levels of feeling angry, having ill thoughts or feelings of aggression, as well as using physical and verbal aggression.

Problem Solving Questionnaire. Mean scores significantly increased on all subscales of the problem-solving questionnaire, demonstrating that participants' ability to identify problems, make decisions, and form solutions increased upon completing WVPP.

A mixed-design ANOVA indicated that there was a significant interaction between pre- and post-program solution implementation and verification scores and impression management, $F(2, 79) = 3.4, p < 0.05$. This interaction demonstrates that whereas low and average impression managers show an equivalent increase, post-treatment, high impression managers report a heightened ability to implement solutions and evaluate the effectiveness of these solutions. It should be noted, however, that this interaction is significant but relatively weak and would not remain significant if a corrected alpha (e.g., Bonferroni correction) were applied.

Criminal Sentiments Scale (CSS). With regard to the CSS, participants indicated lower tolerance for law violation; lower identification with criminal others, and more positive views of law, courts, and police post-programming, compared to pre-programming. Overall, women's responses were more pro-social following programming.

Table 3

Pre- to Post-Program Differences on Standardized Measures

Measure and subscales	Pre-Program	Post-Program	<i>t</i>
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	
Buss Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ)	93.6 (20.1)	77.5 (19.1)	8.2***
Anger	22.1 (6.3)	18.0 (5.5)	6.4***
Hostility	25.1 (6.7)	22.3 (6.1)	4.9***
Physical Aggression	29.5 (8.0)	22.0 (7.4)	9.3***
Verbal Aggression	16.9 (3.6)	15.2 (3.6)	4.4***
Problem Solving Questionnaire (PSQ)	42.8 (15.0)	53.4 (14.2)	-7.8***
Problem definition & formulation	10.7 (4.3)	13.4 (3.6)	-6.7***
Generation of alternative solutions	10.8 (4.0)	13.0 (3.9)	-5.5***
Decision making	11.0 (4.0)	13.7 (3.8)	-6.9***
Solution implementation & verification	10.3 (3.9)	13.3 (3.8)	-8.2***
Criminal Sentiments Scale (CSS)	39.0 (22.3)	53.1 (21.7)	-7.3***
Law, courts, police	81.0 (15.3)	90.2 (15.0)	-7.2***
Tolerance for law violation	25.2 (6.6)	21.6 (6.2)	5.1***
Identification with criminal others	16.8 (3.0)	15.5 (3.1)	3.7***

Note : $N = 82$, $df = 81$.

*** $p < .0001$.

Participant Feedback Questionnaires

Modules. To examine overall trends provided in modular participant feedback questionnaires, data were pooled and mean scores were analyzed for all modules (see Table 6). Overall, with mean scores ranging between 3.4 and 3.8, outcomes demonstrate that participants were generally satisfied with the program and each of the modules. This overall scoring range was consistent with more in-depth examinations when data were disaggregated and analyzed separately for each module.

Table 4

Mean Scores Modular Participant Feedback: All Modules Aggregated

Feedback Item	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>N</i>
Overall Impression		
Overall quality of the module	3.5 (0.6)	642
Extent to which module has met individual needs	3.4 (0.7)	639
Extent to which module has helped deal with problems	3.5 (0.6)	641
Information was easy to understand	3.6 (0.6)	641
Would recommend module to someone with similar problems	3.6 (0.6)	634
Overall satisfaction with module	3.6 (0.6)	638
Program Contents & Methods		
Goals were clear and sensible	3.6 (0.6)	640
Information was useful and important	3.6 (0.6)	639
Extent to which group activities facilitated learning	3.5 (0.7)	639
Use of practice sessions to understanding problems	3.5 (0.6)	637
Overall organization of facilitator	3.8 (0.4)	639

Note. All questions were asked on a similar Likert-type, 4-point scale where higher responses indicated greater satisfaction. “*N*” represents the total number of feedback forms.

Post-Program. Similar to trends seen in the post-module feedback, participants reported largely satisfactory outcomes upon program completion (see Table 7). Mean scores ranged high on the positive end of the rating spectrum, between 3.3 and 3.9, with the highest means pertaining to questions regarding program facilitators (e.g., facilitators’ response and concern, confidence in facilitator) and the overall success of the program.

Table 5

Mean Scores of Post-Program Participant Feedback for Women Completing WVPP

Feedback Item	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>N</i>
Program Length	3.3 (1.0)	77
Group Experience		
Comfortable talking about personal experiences	3.3 (0.7)	76
Group cohesion	3.6 (0.5)	77
Facilitator's response to individual needs	3.9 (0.4)	76
Usefulness of facilitators' feedback ^a	3.8 (0.4)	58
Usefulness of other participants' feedback	3.5 (0.6)	59
Facilitator demonstrates genuine concern	3.9 (0.3)	77
Confidence in facilitator	3.8 (0.5)	76
Program success	3.8 (0.5)	77

Note. All questions were asked on a Likert-type, 4-point scale where higher responses indicated greater satisfaction. The only exception was for program length, where the question was based on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (too short) to 5 (too long); Column totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

^aQuestions concerning facilitator and participants' feedback were combined in the first cycle of the program and are not included in these analyses.

Program Outcomes

This next portion of analyses focuses on institutional charges, offender security level, and segregation, immediate outcomes that reflect behaviour while in the institution. In order to examine whether program participation has a positive influence on institutional behaviours, changes in the occurrence of charges or segregation, and level of security classification were investigated by comparing these components six months before (pre) and six months after (post) the program period. To ensure that changes that occur in the pre- and post-period are not simply attributed to the passage of time, a matched comparison group that had not received programming was also examined.

Tables 6 and 7 illustrate the distribution of a variety of demographic and incarceration characteristics for the treatment and comparison groups. Tests of association were conducted to assess whether these two groups were adequately matched. In all cases, the characteristics did not differ significantly across the two groups, suggesting that the comparison group is matched to the treatment group.

Table 6

Demographic and Sentence Information: Program Participants (Treatment) and Matched Comparison Group⁷

Characteristic	Treatment % (n) or M (SD)	Comparison % (n) or M (SD)	Test of Association
Ethnicity			
Caucasian	45.1 (37)	42.9 (45)	$\chi^2_{(3)} = 0.11$
Aboriginal ^a	41.5 (34)	43.8 (46)	
Black	8.5 (7)	8.6 (9)	
Other	4.9 (4)	4.8 (5)	
Age at Admission	31.3 (8.2)	31.7 (8.2)	$t_{(187)} = -0.32$
Marital Status			
Single	57.8 (48)	56.7 (59)	$\chi^2_{(2)} = 0.63,$
Married/Common-law	26.5 (22)	30.8 (32)	
Divorced/Separated/Widow	15.7 (13)	12.5 (13)	
Sentence Type			
Indeterminate	14.5 (12)	14.2 (15)	$\chi^2_{(1)} = .004,$
Determinate	85.5 (71)	85.8 (91)	
Sentence Length			
Less than three years	33.7 (28)	41.5 (44)	$\chi^2_{(2)} = 1.3,$
Three or more years	51.8 (43)	44.3 (47)	
Indeterminate	14.5 (12)	14.2 (15)	
Most Serious Offence^b			
Homicide	24.1 (20)	29.8 (31)	$p > 0.05^c$
Sexual offences	0 (0)	5.8 (6)	
Assault	30.1 (25)	33.7 (35)	
Robbery	26.5 (22)	16.3 (17)	
Other violent	6.0 (5)	1.0 (1)	
Non-violent	13.3 (11)	13.5 (14)	

Note. ^a Aboriginal includes Inuit, Métis and First Nations. ^b Offence types derived from categories available in OMS; homicide includes convictions for murder and manslaughter; other violent offences include such convictions as forcible confinement and uttering threats; non-violent offences include such convictions as break and enter and theft. ^c Fisher's exact *p*-value is provided due to small cell sizes.

⁷ Note that the comparison group was obtained by matching these participants to the 105 program participants who did not have data quality issues. Tests of association comparing the treatment and comparison groups were conducted using both the $n = 105$ and $n = 83$ treatment samples. Results did not differ. Therefore, the final ($n = 83$) sample is presented. Column totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 7

Intake Assessment: Program Participants and Matched Comparison Group

Characteristic	Treatment % (n)	Comparison % (n)	Test of Association χ^2 (2)
Risk ^a			
Low	13.6 (11)	16.0 (17)	0.56
Medium	35.8 (29)	38.7 (41)	
High	50.6 (41)	45.3 (48)	
Need ^a			
Low	9.9 (8)	2.8 (3)	4.98
Medium	19.8 (16)	27.4 (29)	
High	70.4 (57)	69.8 (74)	
Motivation Level ^b			
Low	5.1 (4)	10.4 (11)	2.69
Medium	60.3 (47)	50.0 (53)	
High	34.6 (27)	39.6 (42)	
Reintegration Potential ^b			
Low	42.3 (33)	37.7 (40)	4.22
Medium	47.4 (37)	40.6 (43)	
High	10.3 (8)	21.7 (23)	

Note. ^a participants: $n = 81$; matched comparison: $n = 106$; ^b participants: $n = 78$; matched comparison $n = 106$. Column totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Post Program

Offender Security Level. Security classification to minimum, medium, or maximum security is based on an offender's level of risk of institutional misconduct, risk to the public, and escape. Given that risk levels can change over the course of incarceration, offender security level (OSL) is reassessed regularly. However, an increase or decrease in security classification reflects a change in risk levels and, therefore, changes that occur following treatment can be used as an indicator of treatment effectiveness.

Before comparing changes in security level across groups, pre- and post-programming distributions were examined to identify whether the treatment and comparison groups were distributed differently across security levels. As demonstrated in Table 8, there are differences in this distribution across groups. Prior to programming, the vast majority (80.7%) of the treatment group was placed in medium security. In contrast, although the majority (59.4%) of the comparison group was placed in medium security, greater percentages of these women were also

classified in minimum and maximum security levels. Following programming, there is less of a discrepancy in the percentage of women in medium security and the treatment group's distribution is more dispersed across security levels. In fact, the treatment group closely resembles the comparison group's pre-programming distribution. However, post-programming, a substantial portion (34.0%) of women in the comparison group was classified as minimum security.

Table 8

Six Months Pre- and Post-Program Offender Security Level, Treatment and Comparison Groups

Offender Security Level	Pre-Program		Test of Association $\chi^2_{(2)}$	Post-Program		Test of Association $\chi^2_{(2)}$
	Treatment % (n)	Comparison % (n)		Treatment % (n)	Comparison % (n)	
Minimum	9.6 (8)	19.8 (21)	8.8*, $\Phi_c = 0.22$	18.1 (15)	34.0 (36)	6.4*, $\Phi_c = 0.18$
Medium	80.7 (67)	59.4 (63)		62.7 (52)	51.9 (55)	
Maximum	9.6 (8)	18.9 (20)		19.3 (16)	13.2 (14)	

Note. Column totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding; $n_{treatment} = 83$, $n_{comparison} = 104$;
* $p < 0.05$.

Change scores (i.e., pre-treatment OSL – post-treatment OSL) were created to assess whether there were group differences in changes to OSL following treatment. Table 9 demonstrates that there was a significant difference between groups. It appears that while both groups have a similar number of women who remained at the same level (i.e., a score of zero (0)), a greater percentage of women in the comparison group (21.2%) decreased by one security level (e.g., medium to minimum security) than women in the treatment group (10.8%). In contrast, a greater percent of women in the treatment group (14.5%) increased by one level (e.g., medium to maximum security) than women in the comparison group (4.8%).

Table 9

Change in Offender Security Level⁸ across Treatment and Comparison Groups

Change in Offender Security Level	Treatment % (n)	Comparison % (n)	Test of Association $\chi^2_{(3)}$
2	1.2 (1)	1.9 (2)	
1	10.8 (9)	21.2 (22)	7.8 *, $\Phi_c = 0.26$
0	73.4 (61)	72.1 (75)	
- 1	14.5 (12)	4.8 (5)	

Note. $n_{treatment} = 83$, $n_{comparison} = 104$. Column totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

* $p < 0.05$

Institutional Charges. Institutional misconducts were examined in the six months before and after participation in the program. During both pre- (see Table 10) and post-programming (see Table 11), the treatment and comparison group did not differ significantly in terms of the percentage of women with institutional misconducts.

In addition, a z -test for proportions⁹, conducted to determine whether the proportion of women with at least one minor institutional misconduct differed significantly across time, was not significant for both the treatment group ($z = 0$) and comparison group ($z = 0.43$). Results regarding major institutional misconducts were also not significant for the treatment group ($z = -1.28$) and comparison group ($z = 0.56$).

⁸ No offenders demonstrated a two-point increase (i.e., pre-treatment = maximum, post-treatment = minimum) in security level.

⁹ The proportion values used are based on the percentages reporting in Tables 12 (for pre-programming) and 13 (for post-programming)

Table 10

Six Months Pre-Program Institutional Misconducts

Institutional Misconducts	Pre-Program		Test of Association $\chi^2_{(1)}$
	Treatment % (n)	Comparison % (n)	
Minor	43.4 (36)	35.8 (38)	1.1
Major	19.3 (16)	18.9 (20)	0.005

Note. $n_{treatment} = 83$, $n_{comparison} = 105$.

Table 11

Six Months Post-Program Institutional Misconducts

Institutional Misconducts	Post-Program		Test of Association $\chi^2_{(1)}$
	Treatment % (n)	Comparison % (n)	
Minor	43.4 (36)	33.0 (35)	2.1
Major	27.7 (23)	16.0 (17)	3.8

Note. $n_{treatment} = 83$, $n_{comparison} = 105$.

A monthly rate for participation in minor and major incidents was calculated in the six months prior to program participation and six months after completing the program. These results indicate a significant difference in the rate of minor institutional misconduct from before (.27) to after (.54) programming. While there was also a noted increase in the rate of major institutional incidents (from .17 pre-program to .25 post-program), these differences were not significant.

In addition to the above comparisons across group and time, these two aspects were examined in tandem by examining changes in the number of minor and major charges committed

(see Table 12). First, a basic change score (post-treatment charge count – pre-treatment charge count) was computed. Following this, the continuum of change scores was categorized into one of five categories¹⁰, ranging from negative two, which represented a large decrease in charges (two or more fewer charges post-treatment compared to pre-treatment) to positive two, which represented a large increase in charges (two or more additional charges post-treatment compared to pre-treatment). Hence, a negative score would represent behavioural improvements while a positive score would represent behavioural declines.

The extent of the change in the number of minor institutional misconducts differs significantly across groups. It appears that this is largely a reflection of the greater percentage of the treatment group (10.8%), compared to the comparison group (0%), showing an increase in the number of charges received in the six months following treatment, compared to the six months prior to treatment. In contrast, there were no significant differences in the change in the number of major institutional misconducts across groups.

¹⁰ Change scores were recoded to be categorical because the continuous change scores were highly non-normal and reflection/transformation options were not appropriate for the data.

Table 12

Change in the number of Minor and Major Institutional Misconducts across Groups

Change in Number of Institutional Misconducts	Minor		Test of Association $\chi^2_{(4)}$	Major		Test of Association $\chi^2_{(4)}$	
	Treatment % (n)	Comparison % (n)		Treatment % (n)	Comparison % (n)		
Decreased							
Charges	-2	12.0 (10)	13.2 (14)	13.5**, Φ_c	0 (0)	2.8 (3)	6.3
↑	-1	14.5 (12)	13.2 (14)	= 0.3	10.8 (9)	10.4 (11)	
No Change	0	49.4 (41)	63.2 (67)		68.7 (57)	76.4 (81)	
↓	1	13.3 (11)	10.4 (11)		16.9 (14)	7.5 (8)	
Increased	2	10.8 (9)	0 (0)		3.6 (3)	2.8 (3)	
Charges							

Note. $n_{treatment} = 83$, $n_{comparison} = 106$. $N = 82$; Column totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

** $p < 0.01$

Some supplementary exploratory analyses were conducted to examine characteristics that may be different about those women who had completed programming, but experienced a large increase in the number of charges they received (“high behavioural decline”), compared to the rest of the group. Most of these variables (i.e., most serious offence, time elapsed between admission and programming, age, ethnicity, sentence type, marital status, criminogenic risk, criminogenic need, and reintegration potential) did not differ significantly between those with increased charges and the rest of the women. One exception to this was their level of motivation. Interestingly, women with increased charges were rated as less motivated to change¹¹ than the remainder of the group, $\chi^2_{(2)} = 6.3$, $p < 0.05$, $n = 78$, $\Phi_c = 0.28$. It is important to note, however, that these analyses were post-hoc and exploratory in nature. Therefore, caution should be taken when interpreting the relevance of these results.

Segregation. There are several reasons why an offender may be placed in involuntary segregation. Most commonly, this form of segregation occurs because the offender was considered to be a danger to others, to the order of the institution, or was in danger herself

¹¹ This analysis of motivation is based on the offender’s last assessment on the sentence.

(Wichmann & Taylor, 2004). Table 13 demonstrates that although the comparison and treatment groups do not differ in terms of the percentages of women who had been placed in involuntary segregation before treatment, they do differ after treatment. A greater percentage of women who had completed the WVPP had been put in involuntary segregation in the six months following treatment than women in the comparison group. Z-tests for proportions demonstrated that the proportion of women in involuntary segregation did not differ between pre- and post-treatment, $z = -0.7$, $p > 0.05$. However, there was a significant drop in the proportion of women in the comparison group who were placed in involuntary segregation in the six months following their mock treatment period, $z = 2.2$, $p < 0.05$.

Table 13

Percentage of Treatment and Comparison sample in Involuntary Segregation Six Months Before and After Program Placement

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Treatment % (<i>n</i>)	Comparison % (<i>n</i>)	Treatment % (<i>n</i>)	Comparison % (<i>n</i>)
Involuntary Segregation	25.3 (21)	18.9 (20)	30.1 (25)	8.5 (9)
Test of Association $\chi^2_{(1)}$		1.1	14.8***, $\Phi_c = 0.3$	

Note. $n_{treatment} = 83$, $n_{comparison} = 105$
 *** $p < 0.001$.

Analysis of intermediate outcomes included examining release from and return to custody among the treatment and comparison groups. Release information demonstrated that the majority of women had been released from the institution; most commonly on statutory release. There were no significant differences in releases types across groups (Table 14).

Table 14

Release Type by Group

	Post-Program	
	Treatment	Comparison
	(<i>n</i> = 81) %	(<i>n</i> = 103) %
Discretionary Release	38.3	36.9
Statutory Release	50.6	47.6
Not Released	11.1	15.5
Test of Association χ^2 (2)	0.8	

Note: Given small cell sizes, “Other” types of release are excluded from this analysis.

Of those who had been released, the majority of both the treatment and comparison did not return to custody (Table 15). Also, the proportion of returns without offence were comparable between groups as 31.3% and 32.9% of the comparison and treatment groups, respectively, had their parole revoked at least once by the end of their sentence or the end of the study period.¹² Further, relatively few returned to custody with an offence (10.8% comparison and 11.4%; treatment). Overall, no significant differences were present between groups regarding returns to custody. Given the low base rate (*n* = 4), returns with a violent offence were not examined further.

Due to small numbers, it was not possible to examine only returns with an offence or a violent offence using techniques that account for varying periods of time at risk. Thus, fixed follow-up and survival analyses were only conducted with any returns (with and without offence). These findings were similar to the overall prevalence of revocation and there were no differences between the treatment and comparison groups; therefore, these analyses are not presented.

¹² Five women who had a revocation for an outstanding offence and one woman who had term of conditional release without an offence were excluded from the full sample.

Table 15

Types of Returns to custody by group^a

	Returns to Custody	
	Treatment	Comparison
	(<i>n</i> = 70) %	(<i>n</i> = 83) %
No return	55.7	57.8
Return without offence	32.9	31.3
Return with new offence	11.4	10.8
Test of Association $\chi^2_{(2)}$	0.07	

Note: ^a based on returns to custody prior to end of an offenders' sentence or the end of the study period.

Discussion

To date, very few treatment programs have been developed to address the specific needs of violent women offenders (Bottos, 2007; Barker, 2009). Given recent increases in the proportion of women serving time for violent offences (Bell, 2004), there is a clear need for treatment options that address the unique risks and needs of these offenders. Prior to developing the Women's Violence Prevention Program (WVPP), the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) had implemented the Spirit of a Warrior Program for violent Aboriginal women. Preliminary outcome data that assessed the Spirit program suggested positive gains were made and demonstrated that both women and staff viewed the program positively (Bell & Flight, 2008). The WVPP is designed to meet the criminogenic needs of women offenders who have a history of acting out violently, but is available for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women. It, therefore, was designed to address the previous gap in violence prevention programming for women.

The current study examined the extent to which completing WVPP assisted women in developing ways of living that are incompatible with violence and reduce the likelihood that they will re-offend upon release. To assess the extent to which the WVPP supports these goals, this investigation included an assessment battery that examined program completion and knowledge gained; as well as the extent to which the following areas are strengthened: motivation to change; ability to identify and replace harmful beliefs and behaviours; problem-solving skills; and institutional behaviours. Institutional behaviours and community-based outcomes were also examined to assess intermediate and long-term program outcomes.

Approximately three-quarters of women who entered the WVPP completed the program. Although there was a significant increase in knowledge regarding the WVPP course material post-treatment, on average program participants score fairly high on the knowledge questionnaire prior to participation in the program ($M = 69\%$).

Identifying ways of living that are incompatible with violence and reducing the likelihood of re-offending violently upon release requires that program participants think about past violent behaviours and develop a vision for a future without violence. In order to support this growth, the WVPP works with program participants to increase motivation to change behaviours. Although the results of the URICA did not demonstrate a significant change in motivation level, patterns of responses to this measure suggest progress in motivational stage. Whereas the majority of women were at the stage of contemplating making a change prior to programming,

most women were taking actions to change post-treatment.

A substantial portion of the WVPP material is devoted to learning to identify thoughts, beliefs, and emotions that are supportive of violent behaviours in order to replace them with healthy coping strategies and behaviours. Changes in program participants' levels of aggression as well as their attitudes, values, and beliefs relating to criminal behavior were examined. Participants reported significantly lower levels of all forms of aggression (i.e., anger, hostility, physical, and verbal aggression) post-programming, relative to pre-programming. In particular, reported levels of physical aggression showed the greatest decline. Similar positive improvements in replacing harmful beliefs and behaviours were found in relation to a measure of criminal sentiments. When compared to pre-programming scores, participants reported lower tolerance for law violation, lower identification with criminal others, and more positive attitudes toward law, courts, and police, post-programming.

Given that program participants may have used violence in the past to solve problems, the WVPP aims to help participants identify and practice improved problem solving approaches. Participants' responses indicated that, relative to pre-programming, they had improved problem solving skills after treatment. Namely, responses indicated increased efforts to clarify and understand a problem and set a specific problem-solving goal; stronger ability to generate alternative solutions to solving a problem; ability to place more emphasis on predicting the consequences of various approaches to problem-solving and determine the best avenue to pursue; and to spend more time evaluating the effectiveness of the solution implemented.

Taken together, the results of the assessment battery demonstrate significant improvements among those who complete programming. Their responses to various measures after treatment were consistently more positive than were their pre-treatment responses. One limitation to interpreting these scores, however, is that improvements to scores may reflect participants' enhanced abilities to respond in a way that reflects positively on them. That is, for example, to the extent that program participants believe that showing progress in their rehabilitation will improve their chances of discretionary release (i.e., release on day or full parole), they may be motivated to respond in a way that is consistent with the teachings of the treatment program. Although there is some evidence that those who are high impression managers present themselves as less aggressive and possessing fewer criminal sentiments, further analyses demonstrated that the amount of change (pre- to post-treatment) does not differ

significantly across individuals varying in their level of impression management. This suggests, for example, that high impression managers are not trying to demonstrate more improvement over the course of treatment than are those in the normal or low range of impression management.

Overall, participant modular and post-program feedback tended to reflect positively on the WVPP, both for individual modules and for the program as a whole. Results of these questionnaires illustrate that women felt that the program material was delivered in a way that was easy to understand and that helped address their problems and meet their needs. Additionally, participants who completed the post-program questionnaire indicated highly positive responses concerning the facilitators' abilities to respond to participants' needs and effectively deliver the program content. These results can attest to the successful implementation of the program and to the women's appreciation for the WVPP. Similar results were found when assessing the violence prevention program for Aboriginal women offenders (Bell & Flight, 2008).

Immediate and Intermediate Outcomes

In addition to the above short-term assessments, various institutional measures were examined over a six-month period post-programming to obtain insight into the influence of the WVPP over the medium-term. This post-programming information was compared to behavioural information in the six months prior to treatment in order to examine individual-level changes. As well, similar information was obtained for a comparison group that was matched on relevant characteristics in order to determine whether any changes that occurred were unique to the group that received treatment.

The results of analyses pertaining to offender security level, institutional misconducts, and involuntary segregation vary, but point to some differences between the treatment group and the comparison group. Whereas the comparison group tended to show improved behaviour in the mock post-treatment period, the treatment group either showed no significant behavioural changes from pre-treatment or some decline in behaviour. More specifically, a greater percentage of the treatment group, compared to the comparison group, experienced a one level increase in security (e.g., medium to maximum security) and a greater number of minor institutional misconducts. Whereas the proportion of women in the comparison group placed in

involuntary segregation declined significantly post-treatment, there was not a significant change for women in the treatment group.

Echoing some of the results of the immediate outcomes, there were no differences in the intermediate release and return outcomes between the two groups. One would anticipate that women who completed targeted treatment would fare better in the period following the programming than before programming; similarly, that they would demonstrate better outcomes than a matched group of women who had not received treatment. However, it is worth noting that the rates of return to custody for *any revocation* are comparable to previous research examining rates of return to custody for violent women offenders (Gobeil, 2007)¹³. The low base rates of reoffending and the limited follow-up time precludes our ability to speak directly to impact of WVPP on post-release outcomes. Results related to outcome therefore must be interpreted cautiously and future studies should examine post-release outcomes with a longer follow-up period.

Supplementary analyses were conducted to examine possible mitigating factors revealed that only motivation assessed closest to the end of sentencing differed significantly between women in the treatment group who had shown substantial increases in their number of charges post-treatment, compared to the rest of the women in the treatment group. The role of motivation in treatment is important as it can have a direct impact on the effectiveness of correctional programming and, over the longer-term, on recidivism (Serin & Kennedy, 1997). However, in the current context, the linkage between behaviours subsequent to treatment and motivation is correlational. Therefore, just as motivation may have an influence on subsequent behaviours, it may also be that the consequences of subsequent behaviours (e.g., change in security level, segregation) have an influence on motivation levels. Future research on the role of motivation as a responsivity issue in women offenders' treatment could shed greater light on the interplay between motivation and treatment outcomes.

The intensity of the correctional program may be another factor to consider in interpreting the outcome results. The Risk Principle indicates that successful program outcomes occur when an offenders' level of treatment service is proportional to their risk to re-offend. That

¹³ Previous rates of return to custody for a two samples of women offenders with a violent index were as follows: *Any revocation*: Cohort 1, 43.8% Cohort 2, 36%. It is important to note that there are methodological differences between the current study (any return to custody before warrant expiry) versus any return to custody including reconviction, resulting from Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) coding with a two year follow-up (Gobeil, 2007)

is, the higher their risk to re-offend, the more intensive the correctional treatment program (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). Given that participants of WVPP generally demonstrate moderate to high static risk and high criminogenic need, it is conceivable that WVPP may not have been intensive enough to meet the needs of the program participants. At the time of program implementation, WVPP was classified as a high intensity program with 100 hours of programming (CSC, 2009) with a potential of an additional 60 hours prior to and after completion of WVPP programming (pre-WVPP introductory program (20 hours), post-WVPP maintenance program (40 hours)). However, since the implementation of WVPP in 2008, guidelines for classifying program intensity have evolved and the current criterion for classifying a program as high intensity requires the provision of 200 hours of intervention. Under these guidelines, even with the additional 60 hours of programming, WVPP would not meet the requirements to be classified as high intensity. This may be a major factor contributing to the negative results associated with institutional outcomes for WVPP participants.

In fiscal year 2010-2011, CSC began implementing a new continuum of correctional programming for women, the Women Offender Correctional Program (WOCP) and the Aboriginal Women Offender Correctional Program (AWOCP). Each stream of programming consists of an Engagement Program, Moderate Intensity Program, High intensity Program, and Self- Management Program. Women complete the elements of the program based on their individuals risk and need levels (CSC, 2010b, 2010c). WVPP is no longer offered to women as it has been replaced by the High intensity program of WOCP or AWOCP. However, many of the skills, and program material are developed from and are similar to the WVPP. In contrast to WVPP, WOCP/AWOCP includes an increased program length (including all subcomponents of WOCP/AWOCP) and increased program intensity (200+ hours), which allow for program skills to be developed in greater depth than previous programs. This additional intensity should theoretically allow the women to better develop the programs skills and strategies into their daily lives in order to address their problematic behaviors linked to crime.

In the context of interpreting the results of the immediate outcomes, it is also important to note that although the three measures used to reflect behaviour are relevant to assessing treatment effectiveness, there is some redundancy among them. For example, an increase to an offender's security level or placement in segregation may come as a consequence of engaging in institutional misconducts. Therefore, it would be surprising to see vastly inconsistent results

among these three outcomes. From the same perspective, the results obtained here may be tantamount to examining one behavioural outcome from three separate vantage points. Given data limitations, other behavioural indicators, such as the use of problem-solving techniques in interactions with staff or other women, could not be examined; it is possible that these would have shown different results.

Limitations and Future Research

One distinct challenge with the design of this assessment is the limited sample from which to draw a comparison group. Although the comparison group was matched to women who had completed treatment, admissibility into WVPP required that the offender had been involved in two or more separate incidents of violence (convictions, institutional charges, or self-report), assessed as having caused a moderate to high degree of harm, and be assessed as moderate to high risk to reoffend (Fortin, & Blanchette, 2008). In all likelihood, most women who were eligible for this program would have taken it. Further, although violent offences are on the rise for women, there are still a relatively small number of women incarcerated compared to men. Therefore, matching based on more stringent criteria (e.g., aggregate sentence length, offender security level) was not possible. In fact, there is some evidence of mismatching based on the differing offender security levels distribution across groups (i.e., greater dispersion across levels among the comparison group than the treatment group). These challenges may have contributed to group differences between the women. As a result, it is difficult to ascertain whether a lack of improvement for the treatment group, relative to the comparison group, was a result of program ineffectiveness or confounding impacts of a comparison group that is not fully matched to the treatment group.

A further limitation is the relatively small size of the sample. Only 83 women completed the program and were considered in subsequent analyses. Quite often this resulted in small cell sizes and limited analytical power, which increases the risk of making a type II error (i.e., failing to find significance when it exists). A larger sample size of program completers would offer greater confidence in the stability and generalizability of the results.

A larger sample size would have allowed for greater exploration of the effectiveness of programming across various sub-samples of participants. For example, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women participated in WVPP. It would be interesting to explore how the effectiveness of programming that is more generic compares to treatment that focuses on the

unique needs of a particular cultural group. Given the recent change in correctional programming for women, future research efforts will be implicated with the ongoing data collection and assessment of the new correctional programs, WOCP and AWOC.

Conclusions

Although the current study demonstrates favorable findings with regard to the participants' perception of the program and gains made through self-reported assessment batteries, program participants demonstrated either negative or null changes when examining immediate and intermediate program outcomes. Given the limited empirical evidence pertaining to violence prevention programs for offender populations (e.g., Barker, 2009; Polaschek & Collie, 2004), there is a continued need for research in this area. It is recommended that research initiatives continue to examine what works with regard to addressing violent behaviour, specifically for women offenders.

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Appendix A: Participant Module Feedback Questionnaire

Participant Feedback Questionnaire : Modules

Module: _____
Facilitator: _____
Institution: _____
Date: _____

The following questionnaire is important for the improvement of this program. **All of your answers will remain confidential and will not be seen by the program facilitator.** When you have completed the questionnaire the facilitator will give you an envelope to seal your questionnaire in.

Overall Impression

1. How would you rate the overall quality of the module you have just finished?

PFQM1

4	3	2	1
<hr/>			
Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

2. To what extent has the module met your needs?

4	3	2	1
<hr/>			
Almost all of my needs have been met	Most of my needs have been met	Only a few of my needs have been met	None of my needs have been met

3. Has the module helped you to deal more effectively with the problems that led to your crime(s)?

PFQM2

4	3	2	1
<hr/>			
Yes, it has helped a great deal	Yes, it helped somewhat	No, it didn't really help	No, it made my problems worse

4. Was the information in the module presented in a way that was easy to understand?

PFQM4

4	3	2	1
<hr/>			
Yes, it was very easy to understand	Yes, most of it was easy to understand	No, most of it was hard to understand	No, all of it was hard to understand.

5. Would you recommend this module to a friend with problems similar to yours?

4	3	2	1
<hr/>			
Yes, definitely	Yes, I think so	No, I don't think so	No, definitely not

6. In general, how satisfied are you with the module?

4	3	2	1
<hr/>			
Very satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied

Program Content and Methods

7. The goals of the sessions were clear and made sense to me.

4	3	2	1
<hr/>			
Almost all of the goals were clear	Most of the goals were clear	Only a few of the goals were clear	None of the goals were clear

8. The information in the sessions was useful and important to me.

4	3	2	1
<hr/>			
Almost all were useful and important to me	Most were useful to me	Only a few were useful or important to me	None were useful or important to me

9. To what extent did the group activities help you to learn (e.g. group discussions, role-plays, practice, etc.)?

4	3	2	1
<hr/>			
Considerably	Somewhat	Minimally	Not at all

10. How useful were the practice sessions in helping you to understand your problems and to change your behaviour (e.g. homework, self-management plan, presentations to the group, etc.)?

4	3	2	1
<hr/>			
All of the assignments were helpful	Most of the assignments were helpful	Only a few of the assignments were helpful	None of the assignments were helpful

11. Overall, how organized was/were the facilitator(s) in running the program?

4	3	2	1
<hr/>			
Very well organized	Mostly well organized	Somewhat disorganized	Very disorganized

Please feel free to add any additional comments:

Thank you for completing this Feedback Questionnaire!

Appendix B: Participant Post-Program Feedback Questionnaire

Participant Feedback Questionnaire: Post-Program

Module: _____
Facilitator: _____
Institution: _____
Date: _____

The following questionnaire is important for the improvement of this program. **All of your answers will remain confidential and will not be seen by the program facilitator.** When you have completed the questionnaire the facilitator will give you an envelope to seal your questionnaire in.

Program Length

1. The amount of time I spent in the program was adequate.

55	44	33	22	11
The program was TOO LONG	The amount of time was JUST RIGHT			The program was TOO SHORT

Group Experience

2. How comfortable did you feel talking about your personal experiences in the group (e.g., past events, thoughts, feelings, etc.)?

44	33	22	11
Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Very uncomfortable

3. How well did the group work together to achieve program goals?

44	33	22	11
The group worked very well together	Worked somewhat well together	Mostly did not work well together	Definitely did not work well together

Appendix C: Materials Examined from the Offender Management System

Demographic and Criminal History Information

Ethnicity. Offenders were classified into one of four groups: Caucasian, Aboriginal (Inuit, Métis and First Nations), Black and Other/Unknown (Arabic or Western Asian, East Indian, Hispanic, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Latin American, South East Asian, Other and Unknown).

Age at admission. The age of offenders at admission was extracted from the Offender Management System (OMS).

Marital status. Women were categorized into one of three groups: single, married, or common-law, and divorced, separated, or widowed.

Sentence type. There are two types of sentences that offenders can receive: determinate and indeterminate. The first occurs when a judge sets a maximum length in an offender's sentence, whereas an indeterminate sentence does not have a specific end date or predetermined length (e.g., an offender that committed an offence that is designated to be severe, such as murder, or individuals considered to be a dangerous offender can receive sentences without an end date).

Sentence length. This variable indicates the total length of an offender's sentence. It divides offenders into three groups: aggregate sentence length greater than three years, aggregate sentence length of three years or less, and life sentence.

Most serious offence. Participants' most serious offence on the sentence was classified into one of six categories: homicide, sexual offence, assault, robbery, other violent, and non-violent. All categories except for "non-violent" are considered violent offences.

Offender Intake Assessment (OIA)

Data pertaining to offenders' level of static risk, dynamic risk (i.e., criminogenic need), motivation, and reintegration potential were retrieved from the Dynamic Factor Intake Assessment (DFIA) and the Dynamic Factor Intake Assessment – Revised (DFIA-R) components of the Offender Intake Assessment (OIA). In all cases where multiple intake assessments were available, the last assessment on the sentence available was retained.

Overall static risk. This variable is used to establish the level of risk of each offender. A rating of low, medium, or high risk is given based on an assessment of static factors concerning an offender's criminal history, offence severity, and sex offence history (CSC, 2007).

Overall dynamic risk or criminogenic need. Dynamic risk refers to an offender's needs, which have been traditionally correlated with correctional outcomes, and are used to determine the level of intervention an offender requires. These needs are considered modifiable through program participation. Offenders are assessed as being low, medium, or high risk based on an assessment of these criminogenic needs (CSC, 2007).

Motivation. Level of motivation is assessed as low, medium, or high, based on an offender's drive and willingness to complete the requirements of her correctional plan (CSC, 2007).

Reintegration potential. The potential for reintegration is assessed as low, medium, or high based on the risk an offender poses to the community when making decisions regarding her required level of intervention or when being considered for conditional release (CSC, 2003). Non-Aboriginal women offenders' reintegration potential is determined by their rating on the Custody Rating Scale (CRS) and the static factor assessment rating from the OIA. For Aboriginal women offenders, this rating is determined using the CRS, as well as both the static and dynamic factor assessments (CSC, 2003).

Outcome Measures

Variables related to security classification, segregation, and institutional misconducts were examined in order to compare institutional behaviours before and after programming as an indicator of program outcomes. Longer-term outcomes were examined by comparing release information and offenders' returns to custody.

Security level. This variable corresponds to the level of security – minimum, medium, or maximum – to which an offender is classified. Security level classifications should reflect an offender's levels of institutional adjustment, escape risk, and risk to the public in the event of an escape. The *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA, 1992) stipulates that the security classification of an offender be reviewed *at least* annually.¹⁴ In addition, reviews must take place when there is reason to believe that the classification level is no longer appropriate.

To assess whether a change to offender security level (OSL) classification occurred after treatment, the security level of the offender obtained closest to the six-month period before

¹⁴ Exceptions to this include: offenders serving a life sentence for first or second degree murder or convicted of a terrorism offence punishable by life whose security classification is reviewed at least every two years, and offenders incarcerated in minimum institutions who undergo security reviews when events occur.

treatment (pre-treatment OSL) was compared to the security level of the offender obtained closest to the six month period following treatment (post-treatment OSL). If a new security level was not provided following the pre-treatment OSL, this original (pre-treatment) value was retained; indicating no change in OSL.¹⁵

Institutional charges. Involvement in institutional misconducts, as a perpetrator or associate, occurring during the pre-treatment period was compared to the post-treatment period. Disciplinary charges were considered to be either major or minor incidents.

Institutional charges were examined from two perspectives: as a dichotomous variable and as a count variable. As a dichotomous variable, participants were given a value of “1” if they received a charge in the six month period being examined (i.e., during the six-months before or after treatment) and a value of “0” if they had not received a charge. As a count variable, the number of charges received during the pre- and post-treatment period was captured.

Segregation. Placement in involuntary segregation in the pre- and post-treatment periods was examined as a dichotomous variable.¹⁶ Participants were given a value of “1” if they had an involuntary segregation placement in the six-month period being examined and a value of “0” if they had not been placed in involuntary segregation during the six-month periods being examined.

Release type. Four release categories were examined: (1) discretionary release, which represents an early release on day or full parole, (2) statutory release, (3) not released (i.e., offender was still in custody on March 31, 2014, or (4) other, which can represent various release types, but is commonly used to represent a release on warrant expiry or a court order.

Return type. Three return options that occur before warrant expiry were considered: revocation with an offence, revocation without an offence, or no return.

¹⁵ Two types of actuarial tools are used for determining Offender Security Level within Canadian penitentiaries. The Custody Rating Scale (CRS) is used in determining initial security placements for both men and women at admission. Security classification beyond admission for men is assessed using the Security Reclassification Scale (SRS), while classification for women offenders is assessed using the Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW).

¹⁶ Count data and voluntary segregation data were not reported because these numbers were too low to provide insight into program outcomes.