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Recovery from addiction and desistance from crime in justice involved women

2023 Issues of substance
CCSA's National Conference
Vancouver
Wednesday, November 22

**We acknowledge that we are
situated on the unceded traditional
territories of the x^wməθk^wəy̓əm
(Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh
(Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-
Waututh) Nations.**

Context

Drugs and crime

Drugs and crime are often strongly interrelated:

- The majority of judicialized people (both women and men) have or have already exhibited problematic substance use;
 - 44% of women in provincial detention have already presented an addiction to alcohol and 60% a problem with addiction to other psychoactive substances (Giroux and Frigon, 2011).
- The majority of people who undergo addiction treatment have committed at least one crime and are judicialized.

*O>E=C; FJ L? MML? M@LNL?; NG ?HN; L? a

- An external source of motivation, which can then be internalized;
- A lever for change.

Context

Drugs and crime vs services

7 ? I ~ ? H₁ H > NB? M G ?
CH > PC > O; FMCH NB? = I LL? = NI H; F
; H > ; >> C NI H M L P C = ? M D

(Brochu, Brunelle and Plourde, 2018)

Long-term effects of services are
observed and a accumulation of
services is often necessary;

A documented positive impact of
addiction treatment is the
significant decrease in criminal
recidivism.

(Brochu *et al.*, 2014)

Context

Desistance from crime

Primary desistance

Do not commit crimes.
Observed by behavior.

Secondary desistance

Identity change.
Observed in their
storytelling of their
trajectory.

Tertiary desistance

2 ?=I AHCNI HI @=B; HA?M<S
I NB?LM/ <M LP?> CHNB?
H; NOL? I @M =C F
L?E; NI HMBCJ M

Research Questions

1

Are there particularities among justice-involved women?

2

How can addiction services contribute to desistance from crime among justice-involved women?

3

How do addiction workers do assisted desistance work with them?

METHOD

From axis 1 of the partnership research program (RÉ)SO 16-35 (project 1A)

- Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used with 140 judicialized people aged 16 to 35 years old in three Quebec regions (T1, 22 % women) :
 - 67 were interviewed again (T2) 20 months later on average (22 % women);
 - Covered themes included:
 - the psychosocial and deviant trajectory of participants;
 - the various services they received;
 - their perception of their journey and;
 - opinions on what is or would be helpful to them in facilitating their desistance from crime and their social and community (re)integration.
- Thematic analysis was used.

Subsample

of this

study

- 17 judicialized women aged 16 to 35 from three Quebec regions who received addiction treatment;
- Average age at T1: 29 years old;
- 53 % single;
- 65 % unemployed;
- Offenses committed: drug-related (65 %), impaired driving (59 %), acquisitive (e.g. theft) (59 %), breach of condition (59 %), against the person/non-sexual (41 %), sexual (12 %), obstruction of justice (6 %), vagrancy (6 %), drunkenness on a public space (6 %);
- 35 % have already been detained provincially while 18% have been detained federally and provincially;
- Recruited in these sectors: addiction (59%); correctional (18%); employability (12%), homelessness (6%); Youth Criminal Justice (6%).

RESULTS

Their substance use and their criminal activities are very interrelated according to their point of view

- Committing crimes while intoxicated or in a state of withdrawal;
- The nature of the offense directly linked to their substance use, like for example drug possession or trafficking, driving while impaired or drunkenness in a public space;
- Committing crimes with the aim of obtaining drugs or paying for their substance use;
- Substance abuse placing them at risk of committing crimes, while for others it is crime which leads them towards substance use.

1. Are there particularities among justice-involved women?

- Many recruited by their boyfriends to sell drugs and several use with them;
- Domestic violence and sexual assault;

Plus it was a harmful and really toxic relationship, for real. It wasn't pleasant there. I decided... Well actually, I needed outside help to be able to get out of there. I couldn't leave there on my own. Well basically, I experienced domestic violence. I wanted to stop using and I wanted to get out of there.

Jasmine

- Pregnancy as a reason to reduce or stop drug use or for using addiction services, but also as a reason to precipitate a relapse or an intensification of substance abuse, just like postpartum depression;

When I got pregnant,... I took care of myself for 9 months. He [her son] kind of saved my life. And then, we agreed with [name of her ex] he would return to work... But he never returned to work afterward. I had postpartum depression and he continued to sell more and more,...he was selling from home... I was going to my mother, but I was also using and I started doing Ketamine and GHB at that time. At one point, we had a surprise visit from the Youth protection services to our home. They forced us to take urine tests... I signed up for therapy knowing that I was going to fail the test. I wanted to go for 28 days at [addiction organization X]... I wanted to be clean so I could have my son.

Éléonore

1. Are there particularities among justice-involved women?

- Need to help others which emerges in their motivations to get involved in delinquency (e.g. the boyfriend selling drugs), but also in what facilitates their desistance from crime and their socio-community (re)integration;

It really makes me happy to do it. My sister also needs injections, she has arthritis like me... It's me who gives her her injection. It just feels natural, and it makes me feel so good to do it. Like my grandparents, they no longer have a car. They are happy when I go grocery shopping with them. Giving of my time makes me feel good.

Aline

- Sense of responsibility towards certain people, but also towards their pet;

I bought myself a dog last year. You have a dog, you have a responsibility there. You can't sleep out drunk or go on the run for two days. You have a dog to take care of at home, you have to feed him so... it's stupid, you have to have a conscience there... Does that help me to manage my substance use? It helps me manage my excesses more. I'll still drink at home, even if I have a dog, but it's just that I won't say to myself after three or four glasses: «I'm going to my friend's, I'm going to continue.» That's it, will I leave the dog alone at home and I just come back the next day? Before that I would have gone... But now, I can't do that.

Antoinette

- Informal social support (especially family) for them or their children.

They [her parents] helped me not to lose my son altogether. But I wasn't doing well and they were there to take him and give him a routine.

Éléonore

2. How can addiction services contribute to desistance from crime among justice-involved women?

Primary desistance: act

Let's say I would relapse solidly there, I would do closed therapy again. Because you know, I also see that a bit as a cessation of action [time out]. There, you have to put on the brakes because you are on a solid skid there.

Antoinette

Secondary desistance: identity

I was always someone who wanted to be there for my family, but there was no... it wasn't something I could maintain, because I wasn't a reliable person. I was my own enemy. In the sense that I often had good intentions, but because substance abuse was present in my life, it meant that I couldn't really be there as much as I wanted, so... I was there on the surface. That's it. It lacked authenticity, and around me, people felt it... I could give my time, but now, what I find interesting is that I am myself.

Aline

Tertiary desistance: social

I recreated links with my family. It's certain that substance abuse has had a big impact on all of that. But in the last two years... precisely when I changed my life, I really recreated links with them... I changed a lot of things, but my parents also changed certain behaviors. My sister too... we did everything we could to improve our relationships together and things are going really well.

3. How do addiction workers do assisted desistance work with them?

- Several participants said they had developed a bond of trust with addiction workers. They appreciate their non-judgmental attitude, their openness, their availability and their perseverance :

I told him: 'I loved you very much, because deep down, you don't judge people. You get to know them. And despite the fact that I've made missteps, stupid things and everything, there hasn't been a time when you looked at me suspiciously. On the contrary, you just wanted to try to understand my old mentality. What have I become? How have I evolved? And it's gratifying... I want to maintain my assertiveness, to be able to assert myself as I do live. Keep my mentality about addiction, that it's poop, not good for me. Realizing that I am a girl with potential, before I didn't see it, I just saw the dark, the negative. Now when I wake up in the morning I can't wait. I know what my potential is.

Chantal

- It was mentioned as helpful by some when the addiction workers are former addicts, which helps them open up to them :

It seems like I had a much greater tendency to open up to the addiction workers who were ex addicts. It seems like it was more tangible... There were some, it was really more theoretical with them... It was less credible in my eyes.

Fanny

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The role of addiction services in desistance from crime

0 LCG ; LS >? MCMN H=?

Do not commit crimes.
Observed by behavior.

Addiction services (AS)
vs less criminal
recidivism

3? =I H>; LS >? MCMN H=?

Identity change. Observed in
their storytelling of their
trajectory.

AS vs identity

Tertiary desistance

Recognition of changes by
others. Observed in the nature
of social relationships.

AS vs social belonging,
recognition of progress and
bridges with the community

Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel, 2004; McNeill, 2016; Villeneuve, F.-Dufour and Farrall, 2020

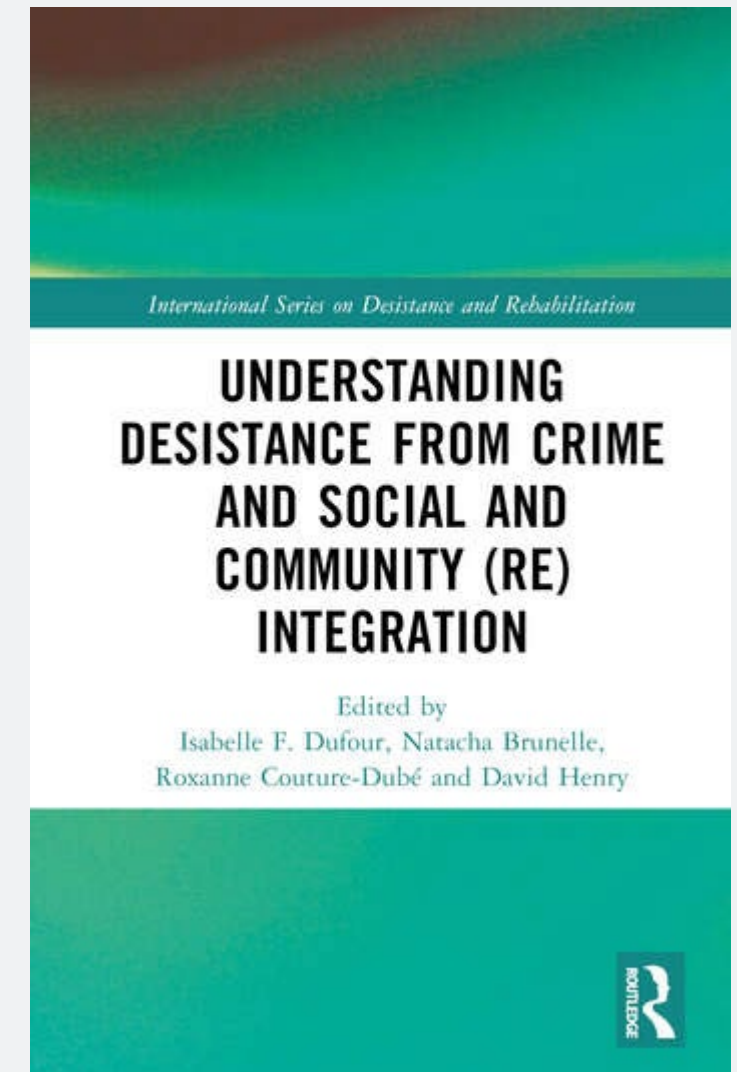
- **Particularities of judicialized women who have used drug addiction services?**
 - Sexual and conjugal victimization;
 - Deviant spouse;
 - Pregnancy, postpartum depression and motherhood;
 - Desire to help others;
 - Sense of responsibility toward certain people and toward their pets ;
 - Support offered to them and their children by members of their family.
- **Addiction workers (AW) are important allies for the desistance from crime of judicialized women (and men) which often involves recovery from addiction:**
 - Privileged relationship maybe in part because of AW main therapeutic mandate (vs control mandate of other actors);
 - Empathy and therapeutic alliance.

To know more on *(R©)SO 16-35* partnership research program (SSHRC partnership grant, 2018-2026), its research and community partners, research projects and productions

Web site:

www.reso1635.ca

Facebook page:
(RÉ)SO 16-35



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