

# Trauma Informed Practice in a Women's prison

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## Introduction

**Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) in prison environments has been a popular discussion in recent years.<sup>1</sup> With TIP having swiftly become a more common policy response in criminal justice, it seems peculiar that there is such a gap in research when it comes to assessing the implementation of this practice in the women's prison estate in particular. Women's prisons are notoriously complex environments, and hence offer the ideal setting for the inclusion of such practices derived from psychological and therapeutic studies.**

This paper draws upon findings from an empirical study set in a closed women's prison, examining the women's experiences of trauma-informed staff practice. This article presents the ways in which prison officers and staff can behave in a more trauma-informed way in their day-to-day practice, according to the mixed-methods data from these female prisoners. More specifically, after assessing prison officers against the five principles of TIP,<sup>2</sup> this article reports staff were successfully implementing safety and collaboration into their daily practice. However, reported inconsistency and unreliability of staff decreased the prisoner's trust of staff, which then also affected their sense of safety.

When an individual has experienced trauma, their reaction to the world around them and their thought patterns are altered.<sup>3</sup> The prison environment has been shown to exacerbate the effects of this trauma, creating

symptoms of stress, anxiety, and panic,<sup>4</sup> and Crewe et al. demonstrated how the pains of imprisonment are gendered.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it is well established that prisoners in the women's prison estate have experienced elevated levels of abuse. For example, 57 per cent of women in prison report having been a victim of domestic violence,<sup>6</sup> and 53 per cent of women in prison report having experienced abuse in childhood.<sup>7</sup> TIP is a way of working with traumatised individuals (such as those who have experienced abuse) which recognises the impact of trauma, and modifies practice to avoid re-traumatising individuals.<sup>8</sup> It has been recognised as a vital practice to develop within the prison environment, yet apart from a 'Becoming Trauma Informed' programme for prison officers running in the women's estate from 2015, new prison officer (POELT)<sup>9</sup> training in England and Wales does not yet include sufficient trauma-informed content. Consequently, prison officers are mostly unaware as to why they should utilise TIP, and how they can behave in a trauma-informed way.

Research that focuses on TIP and staff practice has advised that prison staff should assume every individual in their care is a survivor of trauma, and should utilise TIP in a uniform way to avoid re-traumatising individuals.<sup>10</sup> To achieve this vision, Fallot and Harris together with Covington developed the five principles of TIP to act as a practical way to direct professionals in how to act in a trauma-informed way.<sup>11</sup> These five principles are:

1. Bradley, A. (2021). Viewing Her Majesty's Prison Service through a trauma-informed lens. *Prison Service Journal*, 255, 4-11.
2. Covington, S. (2016). *Becoming Trauma Informed: A Training Programme for Criminal Justice Professionals*. La Jolla, CA: Women's Estate Center for Gender and Justice.
3. Becker-Blease, K. A. (2017). As the world becomes trauma-informed, work to do. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 18(2), 131-138.
4. Covington S. S. (2019). Healing trauma. Available at: <https://www.stephaniecovington.com/healingtrauma.php>
5. Crewe, B., Hulley, S., & Wright, S. (2017). The gendered pains of life imprisonment. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 57(6), 1359-1378.
6. Prison Reform Trust (2017), "Bromley briefings prison fact file", available at: [www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/PressPolicy/News/ItemId/498/vw/1](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/PressPolicy/News/ItemId/498/vw/1)
7. Williams, A. M., Helm, H. M., & Clemens, E. V. (2012). The Effect of Childhood Trauma, Personal Wellness, Supervisory Working Alliance, and Organizational Factors on Vicarious Traumatization. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 34(2), 133-153.
8. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (SAMHSA) (2014). SAMHSA's *Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach*. Available at: [https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA\\_Trauma.pdf](https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf).
9. Prison Officer Entry Level Training
10. Harris, M. E., & Fallot, R. D. (2001). *Using trauma theory to design service systems*. Jossey-Bass/Wiley.
11. Fallot, R. D., & Harris, M. (2006). *Trauma-informed services: A self-assessment and planning protocol*. Washington, DC: Community Connections.

1. Safety: Ensuring physical and emotional safety
2. Trustworthiness: Modelling trust; maintaining appropriate boundaries; consistency in practice
3. Choice: Maximising the individual's choice and control over their life
4. Collaboration: Sharing power, allowing input into their rehabilitation
5. Empowerment: Skill building, providing opportunities so individuals can progress

These five principles have been used as an assessment tool in recent research, and the present study uses them as the foundational cornerstones from which to explore how effectively staff were using TIP in their daily practice.

Despite TIP becoming more common in English and Welsh prisons, there is remarkably little research observing how the implementation of this practice has positively or negatively affected prisoners. Further, no research has yet exclusively assessed staff practice from the perspective of the prisoners themselves. The current study contributes to this knowledge gap and centres on women's perceptions by identifying the areas of staff practice and prison life in which changes can be made to help women feel safer and more valued.

### Situating the Study

TIP is sometimes misunderstood as simply 'good practice', which although is technically true, one could argue it misses the nuance and complexity of this psychologically informed set of behaviours and thought processes. Even though TIP is carried out in therapeutic settings by highly skilled experts, TIP can also be carried out in prison by simply making small changes such as explaining decisions so that prisoners feel more in control, creating a safe spaces for prisoners, and by understanding how to minimise power dynamics between staff and prisoners.<sup>12</sup>

Previous studies on TIP have often focussed on topics such as the prevalence of trauma in prison, or the prison environment and trauma, though very few have focussed directly on the effects of staff practice on those who have experienced trauma. The most relevant and similar study to the current research, explored the prevalence of TIP in two women's prisons through both staff practice and the prison environment.<sup>13</sup> After asking the women to rate how much they agreed with multiple statements, they found their results largely disappointing. Nevertheless, they significantly contributed to the growing expertise and deepening commitment to trauma-informed practice in prison by concluding these practices are worth investing in, particularly in the female estate. The current study

provides a similar contribution to the field, emboldened by front-line expertise, whilst further providing clarity on the specific areas needed for improvement and how to put these into practice.

One study has shown decreased staff assaults and prisoner suicide attempts after implementing TIP into a US prison.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, recent research by Kelman and colleagues confirmed how impactful staff practice can be for prisoners, finding that aspects of staff behaviour were triggering and re-traumatising for prisoners.<sup>15</sup> These two studies indicate how significantly staff

practice may positively or negatively impact prisoners. They re-affirm the need for deeper insight into how prisoners are affected by staff behaviour, and more specifically how staff can avoid re-traumatising prisoners, and start helping them feel safe in this environment. Further, with a recent study finding that the core features of staff-prisoner relationships in a women's prison were blurred boundaries, inconsistency, and favouritism,<sup>16</sup> the importance of deeply examining staff practice is clear, which is why the current article draws upon recent data to suggest ways in which this practice can be improved.

One cannot  
understand  
women's experience  
of prison without  
understanding the  
magnitude of  
complexities created  
by past abuse.

12. See footnote 11.

13. Auty, K. M., Liebling, A., Schliehe, A., & Crewe, B. (2022). What is trauma-informed practice? Towards operationalisation of the concept in two prisons for women. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*.

14. Bissonnette, L. (2013, April 17). Personal Communication with Lynn Bissonnette. [www.cjinvolvedwomen.org/innovator-massachusetts-correctional-institution-at-framingham/](http://www.cjinvolvedwomen.org/innovator-massachusetts-correctional-institution-at-framingham/)

15. Kelman, J., Gribble, R., Harvey, J., Palmer, L., & MacManus, D. (2022). How does a history of trauma affect the experience of imprisonment for individuals in women's prisons: A qualitative exploration. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 1-21.

16. Crewe, B., Schliehe, A., & Przybylska, D. A. (2022). 'It causes a lot of problems': Relational ambiguities and dynamics between prisoners and staff in a women's prison. *European Journal of Criminology*, 14773708221140870.

Crewe et al. introduced the now-well known concept the 'gendered pains of imprisonment' arguing that women have a more painful experience of prison than their male counterparts.<sup>17</sup> The paper strongly emphasised that one cannot understand women's experience of prison without understanding the magnitude of complexities created by past abuse. This 'gendered justice' has been argued to be a pivotal concept within criminal justice, of which policy makers have not taken enough notice. Women's crimes and subsequent experience of prison are embedded in the conditions of their former lives. Their complex pasts form the foundation of their complex behaviour, and this behaviour is clearly significantly impacted by the way staff interact with them.

Waite discovered that women transferring to open prison experienced higher trust from staff, yet their experiences of closed prison were shaped by distrust.<sup>18</sup> They distrusted staff and staff distrusted prisoners, meaning trust of prisoners had to be earned rather than lost. This study showed that some women leave closed prisons with little trust in staff. This lack of trust disables women to build positive relationships with staff, and therefore hinders their access to staff's aid. With trust being one of the five 'core principles' examined in the current study, Waite's research provides a foundation from which to build.

In this field, very few researchers have developed tools for measuring TIP, yet Fallot and Harris created a Trauma-Informed Program Self-Assessment Scale tool for providers to assess their own trauma informed programmes.<sup>19</sup> They present example questions based on the five principles of TIP, to assess how effectively they have employed this practice, and how they can improve in this domain. The researcher chose to incorporate insight from this tool but to create their own unique questions. This was due to having had

frontline experience in this prison, and therefore is able to pinpoint the exact areas of prison life that would bring the most clarity to their research questions.

With such a plethora of research supporting staff implementation of TIP, and momentum growing in this area within the female estate, it is clear that if custodial environments are to positively alter staff-prisoner relationships and improve prisoner outcomes, they need to holistically implement this method in the day-to-day practice of frontline staff.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, as shown, there is currently very little research on the effect and impact of TIP in prisons, particularly in the female estate,<sup>21</sup> and even fewer consult the prisoners themselves to hear their experiences.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, the current research uses the five core principles of TIP

outlined by Harris and Fallot, and Covington, to assess from the prisoners' perspective, how effectively staff in a women's prison implemented TIP into their daily practice.<sup>23</sup> This study highlights the aspects of TIP that the women in this prison felt were implemented effectively, and also things which could be changed in policy and in the daily practice of staff to make them feel more safe and heard.

## Women transferring to open prison experienced higher trust from staff, yet their experiences of closed prison were shaped by distrust.

### Method

This paper draws upon a mixed methods study analysing the experiences of 18 women who had all served more than 18 months imprisoned at the research site. The research was conducted in one closed women's prison serving England and Wales. Ethical approval was granted by Leeds Trinity University ethics committee and HMPPS National Research Committee. This sample, selected through purposive sampling, was used to draw a broad range of responses from a wide range of women.

A 17-question questionnaire developed by the researcher drew together quantitative data from Likert Scale-style questions, and qualitative data from open

17. See footnote 5.

18. Waite, S. (2022). Imprisoned Women's Experiences of Trust in Staff-Prisoner Relationships in an English Open Prison. In *The Routledge Handbook of Women's Experiences of Criminal Justice* (pp. 511-522). Routledge.

19. See footnote 11.

20. Jewkes, Y., Jordan, M., Wright, S., & Bendelow, G. (2019). Designing 'healthy' prisons for women: Incorporating trauma-informed care and practice (TICP) into prison planning and design. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(20), 3818; Petrillo, M. (2021). 'We've all got a big story': Experiences of a Trauma Informed Intervention in Prison. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 60(2), 232-250; Vaswani, N., & Paul, S. (2019). 'It's Knowing the Right Things to Say and Do': Challenges and Opportunities for Trauma informed Practice in the Prison Context. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 58(4), 513-534.

21. Ministry of Justice (2016). *Prison Safety and Reform*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/565014/cm-9350-prison-safety-and-reform-\\_web\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/565014/cm-9350-prison-safety-and-reform-_web_.pdf)

22. See footnote 12.

23. See footnotes 4 and 10.

questions. This questionnaire asked the women about their personal experience of the five principles of trauma-informed practice, and therefore how they experienced TIP in this establishment. The primary research question for this study was: 'To what extent do the women in this women's prison feel they positively or negatively experience: safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment in staff practice?'

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, while the qualitative data were analysed using an inductive approach of thematic analysis to draw out overarching themes. This method was chosen to allow participants to freely express their thoughts on the topic, whilst also allowing the researcher to identify patterns in the data and collate themes. These themes were then critically analysed and compared with the current body of research. The researcher hypothesised that participants would report they experienced a lack of trust and choice within the prison, stemming from poor communication between prisoners and staff. This may mean they did not feel empowered to make their own decisions or encouraged to create their own sense of identity and progress within the prison.

### Findings: The five principles of TIP

#### Safety

The overarching report arising from the thematic analysis on 'safety', was that women in this prison generally felt safe, yet staff inconsistencies decreased their experience of safety. Over recent years, with the increase in prison population and short-staffing issues, reports of prisoner's safety have decreased.<sup>24</sup> Therefore it is also no coincidence that the data shows staff inconsistency when there are nationwide issues with under-staffing, and cross-detailing in prisons. Though these issues are not quickly solved, this report of poor consistency suggests the need for a trauma-informed approach from officers. Prisoners clearly require a consistent and stable environment to increase the already established feeling of safety.

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Despite this positive headline of prisoners feeling safe, the prison certainly has room for improvement. Qualitative data showed that a lack of procedural justice contributed to the distrust between prisoners and staff. As an example of this, one participant reported that when she queried why a decision had been made to an officer, they replied, '*don't need to tell you why, because that's my decision*'. When staff explain their decisions to prisoners, this will often correlate with the feeling of safety,<sup>25</sup> and decreased feelings of fear.<sup>26</sup> This suggests that if staff improve their transparency in decision-making, prisoners will experience fairness and consistency which may help to diminish the 'pains of imprisonment' and improve their already established sense of safety.<sup>27</sup>

#### Trustworthiness

The women reported staff were generally not trustworthy in the study, with only half of participants agreeing they trusted staff to follow through with 'promises', and only 55.6 per cent agreeing that staff communication was clear and consistent. Participants desired consistency in order to trust staff. They called for consistency in actions, and consistency in staff detailing to reduce cross-deployment. Prison management may do well to heed their advice and focus on improving the detailing of staff, and staff on the prison landings, to increase their

reliability and to be more pragmatic in what they 'promise' prisoners.

Some participants spoke of favouritism, with one stating that officers '*treat people differently and are untrustworthy and inconsistent*.' Yet others felt that all prisoners were 'painted with the same brush' by staff — '*don't judge us by the worst prisoner*', meaning women felt judged and largely distrusted. Comments like this call for trusted identity, something which prisoners are rarely enabled to feel. This disempowerment is regularly reported in the prison system and hinders prisoners from feeling like an individual with agency or ability to make their own decisions. A lack of such an identity deters positive behaviour and progression towards behaviour change. Many of the improvements that participants called for

24. See footnote 21.

25. van der Laan, A., & Eichelsheim, V. (2013). Juvenile adaptation to imprisonment: Feelings of safety, autonomy and well-being, and behaviour in prison. *European Journal of Criminology*, 10(4), 424-443.

26. Biggam, F. H., & Power, K. G. (1997). Social support and psychological distress in a group of incarcerated young offenders. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 41(3), 213-230.

27. See footnote 5.

in this study, such as consistency, integrity and reliability, embody TIP and thus indicate the critical need for staff to engage with this practice on a daily basis.

Trust of prison staff has improved over recent decades, with fewer prisoners seeing officers as 'the enemy'.<sup>28</sup> However, the researcher had expected more frequent reports of trust from participants since the prison in question is relatively small (approx. capacity 350), so the 'us-them' mentality between prisoners and staff might be lesser than in larger prisons, which should in theory create stronger cohesiveness.<sup>29</sup> Building relationships with staff generates trust; therefore smaller prisons generally display higher trust levels because there are fewer staff to get to know and greater familiarity between people.<sup>30</sup>

One reason why the data may have been more negative than expected is that this study was conducted after nearly 18 months of Covid 19-impacted regime. During this time, communication with prisoners diminished due to the overly structured regime, which may have resulted in less meaningful relationships with staff, and reduced levels of trust. Though the prisoners reported lower trust in staff than one might have expected for the prison size, they reported high trust in their landing staff particularly more than cross-deployed staff, which supports this body of research on consistency helping to build trust.<sup>31</sup>

### Choice

Participants expressed a lack of control over the choices available to them. One reported '*we are told what to do and when*', and only 38.9 per cent of participants agreed that they had some control and choice in their life. In a recent study in two women's prisons,<sup>32</sup> researchers were disappointed by the

participants' negativity in their reported confidence and control, supporting the current results. This shows the lack of choice and control prisoners can experience when confined to such a prescriptive daily regime. Further, it is supportive of the fact that the prison regime may favour those who are passive, submissive and accept their agency being removed.<sup>33</sup> In the current study, one participant reported '*life in HMP XXX is what you make of it*'; indicating those who sit back often avoid confrontation and disputes, yet they miss out on opportunities available to them. Those who speak out or seek betterment are sometimes labelled 'needy' or 'tiresome' by staff, yet they may better access support and opportunities.

Research shows that prisoners learn to rely on others to make decisions on their behalf due to their autonomy being withdrawn from them.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, when our participants reported needing 'high self-motivation' to progress, this could be affected by the learned passivity that research describes. Nevertheless, staff could improve their communication with prisoners in order to make their options clearer and more accessible.

Participants in the current study reported they desired more of a 'voice' in their prison, and to be heard when they gave ideas to staff and management. Only 33.3 per cent of participants agreed their preferences were taken seriously when voiced to

staff. This mirrors the recent study by Auty and colleagues, where researchers were concerned to find only 16 per cent of participants reported they felt seen and heard in their prison.<sup>35</sup> These shocking and saddening results show how urgently a change in staff practice is needed. Women in prison are feeling the 'pains of imprisonment' more keenly because of the practices of staff in charge of them. Prisoners can feel

Building relationships with staff generates trust; therefore smaller prisons generally display higher trust levels because there are fewer staff to get to know and greater familiarity between people.

28. Crewe, B. (2005). Codes and conventions: the terms and conditions of contemporary inmate values. In A. Liebling and S. Maruna (Eds) *The Effects of Imprisonment*. Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing, 177–208.
29. Tait, S. (2008). Prison officers and gender. In J. Bennett, B. Crewe and A. Wahidin (Eds) *Understanding Prison Staff*. Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing, 65–91.
30. See footnote 29.
31. See footnote 18; Liebling, A. (2011). Distinctions and distinctiveness in the work of prison officers: Legitimacy and authority revisited. *European Journal of Criminology*, 8(6), 484–499.
32. See footnote 18.
33. Woodall, J., Dixey, R., & South, J. (2014). Control and choice in English prisons: developing health-promoting prisons. *Health promotion international*, 29(3), 474–482.
34. Haney, C. (2003). The psychological impact of incarceration: Implications for post-prison adjustment. Retrieved from: <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/psychological-impact-incarceration-implications-post-prison>
35. See footnote 13.

infantilised and degraded by the lack of autonomy that the prison environment affords, and this in turn can cause re-traumatisation for those who have experienced past trauma.<sup>36</sup> If we add dehumanising or uninformed staff behaviours on top of this, we may be enlarging an already critical issue.

Self-determination theory states that choice and autonomy are a vital part of psychological functioning.<sup>37</sup> Further, perceived afforded choice has been shown to correlate with quality of life in prison, supporting our finding that better communication of opportunities is needed in this prison. Staff can give prisoners as much autonomy as possible by clearly presenting all options available to them. For example, notice boards could be utilised more effectively, officers could report upcoming opportunities to people on each landing, and a weekly or monthly newsletter could be published with the courses and groups coming up, and how to access them.

### Collaboration

Findings from collaboration data build on the trustworthiness data; and show that not only do the women in this prison want their voices to be heard, but to be acted upon. In the quantitative data, 61.1 per cent of participants agreed their voice was heard in the prison, yet when given the opportunity to expand on their answers, they said '*I think my voice is heard — but not always listened to*'. Fallot describes what a 'right' relationship between staff and prisoners should look like; respectful but with a 'quiet flow of power'.<sup>38</sup> This hints towards an active role of staff, who show listening and empathy skills, but also show collaboration by using their power to do something about the prisoner's requests. Wachtel and McCold described this nuanced position as 'supportive limit setting',<sup>39</sup> rather than punitive, domineering authority. With Auty et al. also finding this distinctive result that prisoners felt they

were listened to,<sup>40</sup> but not acted upon, it is clear that whilst cooperation is strong, there is work to be done on true collaboration.

Listening to prisoners is clearly not enough to constitute a 'good' officer; staff need to be actively giving prisoners agency in their own decisions and partnering with them in pursuing goals. SAMHSA summarise this well saying, 'working collaboratively to facilitate the individual's sense of control, and to maximise their autonomy and choices throughout the engagement process, is crucial in trauma-informed and trauma-responsive services'.<sup>41</sup>

### Empowerment

Listening to prisoners is clearly not enough to constitute a 'good' officer; staff need to be actively giving prisoners agency in their own decisions and partnering with them in pursuing goals.

Participants gave mixed reports about empowerment in this women's prison; 44.4 per cent reported they were 'not sure' if staff helped them make their own decisions, yet 61.1 per cent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were given opportunities to develop new skills and learn new things in the prison. Qualitative results revealed educational opportunities were particularly empowering for participants. One participant reported:

*'We create our reality, so if the staff and residents want a reality where we all feel valued and true rehabilitation is a real experience, then let's keep the new momentum (that has just started within education) going and push this snowball dinosaur down the hill or positive and forward thinking reformation whooping and cheering all the way.'*

These results indicate that staff have room for growth in their empowering practice, but that the prison establishment has some good opportunities on offer, which in-turn empowers women. The availability

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36. Kilty, J. M. (2008). *Resisting confined identities: Women's strategies of coping in prison* (Doctoral dissertation, School of Criminology-Simon Fraser University).
37. Van der Kaap-Deeder, J., Audenaert, E., Vandevelde, S., Soenens, B., Van Mastrigt, S., Mabbe, E., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2017). Choosing when choices are limited: The role of perceived afforded choice and autonomy in prisoners' well-being. *Law and Human Behavior*, 41(6), 567.
38. See footnote 11.
39. Wachtel, T., & McCold, P. (2001). Restorative justice in everyday life. In H. Strang and J Braithwaite (eds) *Restorative Justice and Civil Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 114–129.
40. See footnote 13.
41. See footnote 8.

of education, good facilities and courses have been regarded in research as the backbone of empowerment.<sup>42</sup> The availability of higher education in US prisons has been shown to increase empowerment.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, although staff in the current prison could certainly improve this area of their practice, the prison showed promising availability of opportunity through courses and education, which is shown by the body of research to be important for empowerment. Thus overall, empowerment is one of the stronger principles of TIP experienced by women in this prison. One participant concluded:

*'LISTEN when we struggle, HELP in meeting unusual needs, PUSH the archaic boundaries on our behalf, WORK WITH us to offer the SINCERE re-assurance that would help so much'.*

This quotation neatly summarises the areas identified in this study that need improved TIP. This participant calls for staff to listen to their needs and to act upon them — a desire which shows the need for improved choice and collaboration. They call for staff to work collaboratively with prisoners, not for prisoners, to ensure they feel empowered in their choices, and build safe and trusted relationships with staff. Finally, they call for staff to *'push the archaic boundaries'* on their behalf, acknowledging the 'flow of power' within prisons, and asking that staff build rather than

dismantle trust, and to encourage identity rather than to dehumanise prisoners with their actions.

## Conclusion

This article examines the implementation of TIP in a closed women's prison. The study investigated prisoner's reflections of staff practice through Covington's five principles. The overarching results showed that women in this prison felt safe, empowered, and that regular landing staff were mostly reliable and good role models. However, the reported lack of staff consistency and unreliable communication reduced their sense of trust, choice, and safety in this prison. Further the women wanted to be heard and their words acted upon.

Creating trauma-informed environments in women's prisons is an extremely challenging task due to the high rates of prior abuse, prevalence of trauma, and complexity of backgrounds of the prisoners. This article builds on our knowledge as to how we can improve women's experience of this inherently hostile environment. Whilst taking into account the dynamic and complex nature of women's prisons, it calls for a gendered justice approach to making change, as well as improved consistency and trust from prison staff. It presents small adaptations to practice, with the hope of allowing prison staff to move towards this improved way of working, as a contribution to the wider drive towards a trauma-sensitive prison estate.

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42. Liebling, A., & Arnold, H. (2012). Social relationships between prisoners in a maximum security prison: Violence, faith, and the declining nature of trust. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 40(5), 413-424.

43. Evans, D. N., Pelletier, E., & Szkola, J. (2018). Education in prison and the self-stigma: Empowerment continuum. *Crime & Delinquency*, 64(2), 255-280.