Social Integration into Society of Female Re-offenders

From the Perspective of Professionals

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ABSTRACT

**Title:** Social Integration of Female Criminal Re-offenders - From the Perspective of Professionals

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The purpose of this study was to investigate how professionals experience the process of social integration, to find out what factors and what measures could be used as optimal ways to work towards an as good as possible social integration into society for female re-offenders in Sweden. Qualitative methods like face-to-face interviews together with email correspondence were used to gather data. Social Learning theory, where people learn from one another within a social context were used together with information from previous research as basis for the analysis. Four important factors were identified; something meaningful to do, housing, network and health/drug and alcohol misuse. Most optimal measures identified were; co-operation, community work and adjusted support. It was found that professionals of both genders play an important role together with positive role models, genuinity, motivation and factual, adjusted judicial punishment. Further it was found that age and readiness for a life change place a role in the integration.

**Key words:** Female criminal re-offenders, social integration, qualitative method, face-to-face interviews and email correspondence
PREAMBLE

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1. INTRODUCTION

For every human being there is a right to feel included in life, in a society (United Nations, 2012a, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, articles 21 & 22). Social policies worldwide need to ensure the fulfilment of social inclusion for everyone as;

Social inclusion is the process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities - that everyone, regardless of their background, can achieve their full potential in life. Such efforts include policies and actions that promote equal access to (public) services as well as enable citizen’s participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives (United Nations, 2012b).

In the work to ensure equal opportunities it is important to recognize peoples’ different conditions as for example gender, age and culture, the differences should be seen as strengths and potentials. When trying to integrate everyone, both men and women, into society social integration needs to be implemented as a fundamental idea as “social integration represents the attempt not to make people adjust to society, but rather to ensure that society is accepting of all people” (United Nations, 2012b). Hence professional social workers commit themselves to develop the equal opportunities for all people but need to be especially aware of the underprivileged groups as for example women. It is important to highlight female’s access to society to be able to achieve equal opportunities for women (The International Federation of Social Workers, 2012). United Nations (UN) has pointed out the immense importance of equal opportunities within the area of female criminal offenders’ (United Nations, Resolution 2010/16), even so many women are still currently disadvantaged as much research, programmes and practical work are based on men (Wilkinson in McIvor, 2004). However even if the women is a smaller group than the men within the area of criminal offending in some countries the female prisoners increase at a quicker rate than male prisoners (United Nations, 2008). Although there are countries, like for example Canada and Sweden, where special policies or guidelines have been put in place to equalize the gap between female and male criminal offenders (Correctional Services Canada, 2012 and Sveriges Riksdag, 2009). In the work to create more equal opportunities towards a social integration for female criminal re-offenders in Sweden the professionals might play a vital role together with the rest of the society on all levels to provide the best possible social support for women burdened with criminal behaviour.
1.1 Aim

The aim with this study is to investigate how professionals in Sweden experience the process of social integration and to find out what factors they believe are most important and what measures they believe could be used as an optimal way to work towards an as good as possible social integration into society for female criminal re-offenders. We consider it is important that female criminal re-offenders can get adequate opportunities and possibilities of social support from society in order to progress into a more socially included life after committing crimes. The interest for the subject of social work in relation to criminal re-offending arose as it has not been, according to us, a subject that has been emphasized much within our Social Work Programme. We believe this is an area of importance and should not be overlooked when discussing social work. As we proceeded, it became clear that an interesting study could be to narrow the scope by looking at female criminal re-offending in relation to social work. Female criminal re-offenders did not seem to be a prioritized group and that might involve social problems which can lead to social exclusion from social services of society to a larger extent. After studying the literature within the subject of female criminal re-offending the material found was limited about what factors and measures professionals working with female re-offenders find are important regarding the work of social integration and prevention of re-offending. With our study we want to make a contribution to highlight the importance of a debate and future social work concerning facilities to be able to have a constructive social life for women, in this case female re-offender’s chances of social inclusion into society.

Main question:
What factors are in the opinion of the professionals working with female criminal re-offenders most important in the work for social integration into society for female criminal re-offenders?

Sub question:
What measures in the opinion of the professionals that are working with female criminal re-offenders could be an optimal way to work towards social integration into society for female criminal re-offenders?
1.2 Essay disposition

In the first section of this essay an introduction of the field chosen is presented, the introduction is followed by aim, questions and issues. Thereafter previous research is introduced to explain the scientific knowledge and concepts used in this essay. The essay emanates from the hermeneutic approach and the social learning theory is used as the theoretical framework together with central concepts in the study, this is presented in the third chapter. Chapter four describes the methodology in detail, explaining the method’s connection to the fulfilment of the aim of the study. In chapter five results are presented with information gained from the interviews together with analysis of the result in relation to previous research and the social learning theory. In the final chapter results of the study is discussed, interpreted and evaluated. To conclude, a short discussion is held with suggestions for future research.

1.3 Explanation of concepts

To make it easier for the reader we would like to explain some of the concepts of this study. Social integration is “a dynamic and principled process in which societies engage in order to further human development. Successful social integration processes encourage “coming together” while respecting differences, and consciously and explicitly putting great value on maintaining diversity. Social integration represents the attempts not to make people adjust to society, but rather to ensure that society is accepting of all people” (United Nations, 2012c). The definition professionals are in this study used for people with different kinds of education, experience and adequate knowledge working with the target group of female criminal re-offenders. The female criminal re-offenders that are discussed in this study are those who are of the age of criminal responsibility. The age of criminal responsibility can depend on a country’s legislation. Definition of criminal offending in this study is used to make clear that it is about actions, not individuals/characteristics as defined in criminality (Hirschi & Gottfredson in Laub, 2002) regarding crimes committed by adults. Delinquency is a word that is foremost connected to petty crimes and is used mainly in connection with youth that is juvenile delinquency (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012 a). The word client is used in this study as a definition for female criminal re-offenders as that is an established word within the authorities and organizations that was interviewed for this study.
2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

This chapter presents literature about female and re-offending from a few different countries, it is very clear that most of the research originates from Canada and USA. When studying the research area there are three recurrent areas that are mentioned; female criminal re-offending, female criminogenic needs and victimization and network influence. These three areas will be explained further in this chapter.

Research shows that the female criminal offending has increased over the last three decades (Blanchette in International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, 2006, Koons et al., 1997, Siegel & Senna (2000) in Mullis et al. 2004, Smith & Smith, 2005 and Walldén, 2000) and that once women are in the justice system it is difficult for them to find a way out of it and they become re-offenders (Bloom & Covington, 1998). Important names within the research regarding criminal offending which includes female criminal offending are D.A Andrews and James Bonta who also developed the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model, a model on how to understand criminal behaviour, this model will be explained further on in the chapter. Other frequent names within the female criminal offending area of research that we have through literature search observed are for example Meda Chesney-Lind, Carol Hedderman and Barbara Koons.

2.1 Female criminal re-offending

What is known about female criminal re-offending? General research found about female criminal re-offending shows that for women to become involved in criminal offending is often depending on the impact of social circumstances, for example strained relationships with relatives and/or significant friends, abusive relationships, poverty and addiction rather than it being a choice they want to make it is a choice that they have to make (Bloom & Covington, 1998, Martin et al., 2009, Lart et al. in Ministry of Justice, 2008a, Mullis et al., 2004 and Smith & Smith, 2005). As the statistics in fact shows that female criminal offending has increased, it might indicate that the female criminal offending has not been taken seriously by society so far. Some researchers mean that women are not seen as the typical criminal, that they are not seen as a potential threat to society (Ahola et al. in Ahola, 2010, Hessig in Psychoscope, 2008 and Kakar et al., 2002). There is research that suggests that female criminal offending is connected to stigma (Bloom & Covington, 1998) because when looking at the female offender and their behaviour it is not the picture of how a woman should behave, it is not the image of how society sees women. Instead the image of how society sees
women is that of that women should be caring and looking after the family and not being able to commit crimes like for example murder (Bloom & Covington, 1998 and Hessig, 2008). According to Bergström (2009), Swedish women do not always receive the same level of judicial punishment as men committing the same kind of crime or are sometimes not even convicted at all. If that is the case, women may in that way not receive the needed facilities that are adapted treatment for their needs and it could diminish the women’s chances of getting back into society after committing a crime. Recent research by the Swedish researcher Ahola, has also pointed to that gender amongst other things can make a difference in the judicial sanctions received by women that is that women are more likely to receive lower penalty than men (Ahola et al. in Ahola, 2010). One comparison to the comments by Bergström and Ahola in Sweden is statistics from the Home Office (2004:3) in United Kingdom (UK) which is brought forward in the report by Hedderman et al. (2011, p. 4): “The evidence suggests that courts are imposing more severe sentences on women for less serious offences”. It continues with the explanation on why the courts are doing this; “The intention is not to give the women offenders preferential treatment but to achieve equality of treatment and access to provision” (Home Office, 2004:5 in Hedderman et al., 2011, p. 4). It seem to be a difficult issue to solve, reducing female offending, therefore there is no surprise that most researchers ask for more research to be made. Figures from UK shows that chances of completing a General Offending Programmes increases with 50 percent for girls if contact with the law enforcement take place before the age of 14 (Martin et al., 2009). Chesney-Lind (2001) highlights in her research about teenage girls delinquency in Hawaii, that even if more and more girls are getting involved in delinquency it is still not in any way prioritized in the discussions about female delinquency and how programmes should be adapted to different target groups, that is girls and women and she also mentions the importance of that prevention programs should need to start earlier than the teenage years.

The Social Exclusion Unit’s report from UK has identified nine key factors from the research they have studied, key factors that they believe can have an impact in reducing re-offending; education, employment, drug and alcohol misuse, mental and physical health, attitudes and self-control, institutionalisation and life skills, housing, financial support and debt and family networks (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). A disturbing and alarming situation for some cases of women is that their own perception of safety due to experiences of turbulent social circumstances has left them with needs of safety that can only be met within the prison walls where the prison can for the women be a place where they can have a feeling of security, that is escaping from abusive connections (Bloom & Covington, 1998 and Koons et al., 1997). For
these women a sentence can maybe be seen from another perspective as being a positive experience, being a kind of saviour, a needed change instead of being a punishment. It can be a way for the women to actually receive the most suitable facilities in order to stop re-offending and maybe it is possible that some female delinquents re-offend as a way to cry for help.

Central in much research found for this study about criminal offending, criminal behaviour and cognitive abilities is the model of Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR), developed from Psychology of Criminal Conduct (PCC) which is based on the Social Learning Theory (Lardén, 2009 and McWhinnie, 2006, p. 8). Dowden & Andrews (1999) consider that the RNR model is effective and important in working with female offenders as this model show decreased relapses into criminality within this group. According to Andrews & Bonta (2010, pp. 45-52), the RNR model is based on three principles: 1) the risk principle which means “matching levels of treatments services to the risk level of the offender”; 2) the need principle which means to assess criminogenic factors that is factors that are connected to the criminal behaviour that maybe can be changed, which can then be promising targets for treatments; and 3) the responsivity principle which aims to tailor the learning style to maximize the offender's ability to learn from a cognitive behaviourial treatment method. The RNR model with the risk principle seems like it is more applicable to high risk offenders, the offenders with more risk of relapse into criminal behaviour then low risk offenders with less risk of relapse into criminal behaviour (Blanchette, 2002, Brusman Lovins et al., 2007 and Lart et al. in Ministry of Justice, 2008a). However when reading the report by Brusman Lovins et al. (2007) from USA they also claim that the offenders that are more likely to relapse into criminal behaviour are the low risk offenders. A danger for the low risk offenders could be that they are not given enough and effective support, the support need to be adequately adjusted to the low risk offenders’ need. If for example the low risk female offenders are not supported for them the right way, to be seen in an individual context they might revert back to negative patterns, that is having to go back to their destructive networks. The women might for example be forced to commit a crime due to financial-, personal- or relationship problems. The actual crime that they have committed might cause a crisis in their lives which in turn lead to social problems, for example relapses into addiction which in the long run might lead to relapses into criminality. An Australian study has shown that the actual supportive network of family and/or friends that a criminal have might make the difference between staying away from criminal offending and getting a successful social integration into society or not (Shinkfield & Graffam, 2007).
2.2 Female criminogenic needs

Female criminogenic needs, why are they important? Connected to the RNR model and the need principle with criminogenic factors are the female criminogenic needs, that is factors that are connected to female criminal behaviour and which are more relevant to women specifically, like for example family influences, tendency to self-injure (Blanchette & Brown in Martin et al., 2009) and history of seeing or being part of abuse. According to some researchers the female criminogenic needs, might be connected to why women become delinquents or why they have the need to become delinquents (Hedderman et al. in Ministry of Justice, 2008b) A possible scenario from a woman’s life could be the one of the single mother with children to tend for where the economy is poor and a possible solution to her situation would be to commit a crime in aid to support her family, with for example selling illegal drugs or prostitution. When the woman is committed to prison for her crime the prison service might not look at her situation from a holistic perspective and miss seeing significant factors involved in why the woman committed the crime in the first place for example the need to support her family. Research has indicated that the actual female criminogenic needs are not always seen in its factual context, when the women are being sentenced assumptions might be made, maybe unconsciously, about the reasons for why the crime was committed in the first place (Hedderman in Martin et al., 2009). As the research explains it is important to acknowledge and understand the female criminogenic needs to be able to comprehend the full context of the female offender’s situation.

2.3 Victimization and network influence

How does victimization and network influence have an impact on female criminal offending? Existing research indicates that many women unfortunately have been victims of different kinds of abuse and/or other maltreatments in childhood themselves before they become the offender and are therefore in need of specific support and treatments (Bloom & Covington, 1998, Chesney-Lind, 2001, Hollin & Palmer, 2006, Kakar et al., 2002, Martin et al., 2008, Hedderman et al. Ministry of Justice, 2008b, Mullis, 2004 and Smith & Smith, 2005). In some studies it has been found that there is a lack of seeing the girl delinquent’s situation in its full context with regards to the family and friend’s network around the girls as the network can for the girls be both a strength and/or weakness in the work towards social integration into society (Chesney-Lind, 2001). The strength in having a good, constructive network outside prison could be for the woman very positive as the people around the female offender is there to take part and support the woman. Therefore a network that is included could be seen as
being important, that it is given the opportunity to be able to take part in the programmes designed to aid the women in recidivism and social integration into society. The weakness of a bad, destructive network could for the woman give a feeling of ambivalence as the need for a clean break is necessary from the destructive network as a path to avoid becoming a re-offender and instead integrate into society (Koons et al., 1997). The people that the woman need to break with to save herself might be her family and it can give the woman a feeling of guilt (Kakar et al., 2002). A non-existent network could maybe many times be easier to deal with than a destructive network as to start with a clean slate might be easier than having to fight with a destructive network that might not want you to change, as the woman might have been a good source of income for the network, for example selling drugs or working as a prostitute. In the report from the Ministry of Justice, UK (2008b) regarding the Together Women project it was concluded that female offenders often have a feeling of low-esteem and therefore not having a belief in themselves and because of that not giving themselves a chance to change. A possible way to empower the women in their experience of the feeling of low-esteem as an obstruction to a possible change, which has by the women themselves been highlighted as a very important factor, is the staffing, the way the professionals is put together as a group and how they work in their support together with the women (Koons et al., 1997, Hedderman et al. in Ministry of Justice, 2008b).

2.4 Summary of previous research

Most of the researchers in the area of female criminal offending and re-offending agree about the need for more research to be made (Bloom & Covington, 1998, Dowden & Andrews, 1999, Hollin & Palmer, 2006, Kakar et al., 2002, Koons et al., 1997, Lart et al. in Ministry of Justice, 2008a, Mullis et al., 2004, Smith & Smith, 2005 and Walldén, 2000). Important aspects to take in consideration in further research are that much research about criminal offending is predominantly about male and the female criminal offending needs to be highlighted. The nine factors found that affect re-offenders in UK as mentioned previously under section 2.1 need to be considered for female re-offenders to get the support adapted to the individual to be able to stop re-offending. More research on the women’s situation seems to be needed to promote collaborations between authorities in order to be able to get sustainable holistic solutions of the social integration into society for female re-offenders. Another perspective not written extensively about in the literature found is professionals’ significance when working with female re-offenders and what factors professionals consider is of importance for the social integration process and therefore we hope our study will bring
some information to that perspective. There might be limitations in using research from only a few particular countries or continents when other countries want to use and adapt the research found as a reference in discussions regarding female criminal offending in their country. It is essential to be aware of which culture the women belong to when looking at female re-offenders and their social integration into society as the research found has to be applicable to the actual country’s situation for example social, legal and cultural structure of the country. This kind of problems regarding the need for research that is adapted to the actual country’s situation has been commented on by researchers (Brusman Lovins et al., 2007, Chesney-Lind, 2001 and Lart et al. in Ministry of Justice, 2008a).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter the Social Learning theory will be introduced. In pursue of the aim of this study the social learning theory will be used to examine how professionals working with female re-offenders describe their views concerning abilities for female re-offenders to learn other ways of behaviour within the social context during and after a prison sentence. The social learning theory will be used as this theory explains how people learn things, such as values and social behaviour when observing and participating within a social context (Parrish, 2010). The social learning theory is a combination of behaviouristic and cognitivist perspectives and the most prominent advocate for the social learning theory is Albert Bandura (Angelöw & Jonsson, 2000). The intention with using this theory is to show that ways of behaviour can be changed within a social context that for example the people working and living around the female re-offenders can become a model to learn from, for the women, a new behaviour (Bandura, 1977). The female criminal re-offender can by looking at positive role models, as for example a social worker, see how they act and learn a new behaviour; learn how to behave to be able to live a non-criminal lifestyle. Factors that the people working with the female re-offenders find necessary and important, for example positive support and motivation, might have an impact on a new way of learning and behaving in order to stop re-offending for women. The reason for selecting the social learning theory for this study is that in the inventory of previous research for this study, the social learning theory seems to be the main theory used and seems to be an applicable and suitable theory within the social work field of female criminal re-offenders. In this study learning by response consequences and learning through modeling will be further examined with relevance to social work. According to Angelöw and Jonsson (2000) the humans learn behaviour by their own trial and error experiences and by observing other peoples’ behaviour. These two ways of learning are
connected within a social context and they complement each other (ibid.). In social learning theory Bandura describes these two ways of learning as the *response consequences* and *learning through modeling* which will be explained further.

### 3.1 Learning by response consequences

Learning by response consequences is explained by Bandura (1977); as behaviours that a person learns from experiencing things in everyday life, meaning that a person learns behaviour by trial and error. This is in order to find a behaviour proved as the most successful without the least negative responses and what has been learnt by trial and error will be used in later situations in their life (ibid.). Bandura (1977) defines three different functions within the response consequence concept; *informative function* where a person collects information of what is a successful behaviour or not, this to be used for a particular situation; *motivational function* where a person uses the information gained from earlier positive experiences in motivating themselves to a certain behaviour in similar situations in the future and finally *reinforcing function* that is for a person’s behaviour to be reinforced, a person needs to observe other person’s behaviours to confirm the behaviour they have learnt themselves earlier.

### 3.2 Learning through modeling

Bandura (1977) explains that people mostly learn how to behave in all kinds of situations through observing other people’s behaviour and then use this information gained as a personal manual for how they can behave in future similar situations. Bandura calls this learning through modeling, it means that a model, a person that the observer learns from, that they can model themselves on, demonstrates how to think, behave and what to learn in different situations (ibid.). A model might influence what choices a person make, for example which life style pattern to choose, that is, a criminal life style or not. Bandura (1977) describes the learning through modeling to be a process that contains four parts; attentional-, retention-, motor reproduction- and motivational processes, these will be explained next.

#### 3.2.1 Attentional processes

The first part of the learning through modeling is attentional processes. In the first stage of the attentional process it is of importance of being able to be attentive when observing a model in order to be able to learn, which can differ between people depending on their ability on how long a person is able to keep focus when observing and what kind of activity is being
observed (Bandura, 1977). This can for example be explained by someone not being able to focus because of problematic situations around the person, like housing-, financial- and childcare issues and/or physical or psychological illnesses which might affect the person to not being able to focus long enough or at all. Second, it is also of importance who the model observed is and what characteristic the model has (ibid.). The persons that the observer meet and see the most are the ones the observers mostly uses as a model, like for example family and friends (ibid.). Also the meaning of what kind of characteristic a model has might be of importance when certain persons attract the attention of the observer more than others, like for example someone in the observers social network or even someone in the world of media (ibid.).

3.2.2 Retention processes
In the second part of learning through modeling, the retention process is explained as the observer’s ability to remember how they have seen a model behave earlier (Bandura, 1977). With retention meaning that the observers need to collect, store and rehearse earlier information about models behaviour (ibid.). This in order to be able to retrieve and apply the information in form of images and words gained in future situations when the model is no longer present (ibid.). It can therefore be important to be able to retrieve a behaviour learnt from models at earlier stages. This is to be able to function within for example, different maybe new social and cultural situations, where a person must be able to retrieve for them not a customary way of behaviour.

3.2.3 Motor reproduction processes
Motor reproduction processes is the third part in learning through modeling which can be explained by having an ability to translate and apply the knowledge that a person remember to have observed regarding a situation performed by a model and transform that to an actual behaviour (Bandura, 1977). The ability to translate memories of behaviour knowledge might not always be the same for everyone, as people have different conditions, abilities to more or less perform the task of translation and in that way have different abilities in how to handle a situation appropriately (ibid.). It is also important with constructive feedback in the process of motor reproduction as the observer might not have learnt a behaviour completely; some things might have been missed when the observations were made as it can be difficult to be self-critical (ibid.). It can therefore be difficult to adjust for possible errors in the behaviour if you do not get feedback (ibid.).
3.2.4 Motivational processes
Motivational processes is the last part in the learning by modeling process and motivation is a very important factor for the observer when it comes to be able to complete the process of observation, translation and reproduction of a behaviour from a model (Bandura, 1977). For an observer, a combination of positive feedback from the model together with positive results that a model receives from their behaviour, will motivate the observer to repeat a particular behaviour of the model and not the behaviour that they see has had a negative result for the model (ibid.). Even so an observer can repeat a behaviour, but without the motivation and understanding they might not think of the meaning and consequence behind the behaviour (ibid.).

3.2.5 Summery of learning through modeling
To recap the learning through modeling, first, the observer have to be able to keep the attention when observing a model, not to miss out important information, second, the observer need to be able to remember what they have observed, to be able to use the information when needed, third, the observer need to be able to translate and repeat the information gained and finally, four, the observer need to feel motivated by getting positive feedback from the model and seeing positive results of the models behaviour.

3.3 Reciprocal determinism
According to Parrish (2010), Bandura’s social learning theory can be explained as triangular where behaviour, environmental factors and personal factors interact on equal terms as a process, Bandura (1977) refers to this process as reciprocal determinism (see figure 1).

Figure 1
Reciprocal determinism
Bandura within Social Learning Theory

Authors after Parrish (2010) and Olson and Hergenhahn (2009)
When in reciprocal determinism the three factors interact it can cause people to develop a self-efficacy, the “individuals' perception of their own capacity to succeed at a given task or effort”, which will able them to have effect on the world that surrounds them as well as the world will affect them in turn (Bandura, 1977, Olson & Hergenhahn, 2009 and Parrish, 2010, p. 122).

3.4 Application of social learning theory in social work

From a social workers perspective the social learning theory can be useful to explain the impact of the interaction between behaviour, environmental factors and personal factors (Parrish, 2010). Behaviour can for example be affected by your social network, in what kind of neighbourhood you live and in what kind of family you grew up. The social learning theory can also give the social worker, in this study professionals working with female criminal re-offenders, a base to understand why a certain behaviour occur and provide tools in order to give a person, in this study female criminal re-offenders, a way to see their own capacity to be able to make for them a positive life change. The social learning theory can also be used when looking at cultural perspectives (Angelöw & Jonsson, 2000) from at least two angles. First, for example when people are forced to move to a different country and becoming a refugee, the social learning theory can be applied when observing things like manners and customs. The social worker can in those cases be a model for the behaviour of a culture in the new country. This can prevent a criminal behaviour as the laws of the new country can be different, for example in a country like Sweden corporal punishment of children is prohibited but this is not the case in all countries in the world. Second, from the perspective of a social worker working internationally, the social learning theory can be used to understand new cultures, ways of thinking and behaving, in order to conduct social work professionally in the context of the new country of employment.

4. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methods chosen in order to fulfil the aim of the study, which is to be able to investigate how professionals experience the process of social integration and to find out what factors they believe are most important and what measures they believe could be used as an optimal way to work towards an as good as possible social integration into society for female criminal re-offenders. Research found for this study has used both quantitative and qualitative methods. In this study a qualitative approach was chosen where the design of face-
to-face interviews and email correspondence have been used in combination as a way to best suit the interviewee to take part (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) and to be able to gather relevant facts for this study. In order to gather both in depth data and also to be able to reach within a broader area in Sweden a mixed design within qualitative methods was chosen (Denscombe, 2009). This study aims to describe which factors are important in the social integration process of female criminal re-offenders and what measures could be used as an optimal way to work according to the professionals own understanding which goes in line with a phenomenological position. As within the phenomenological position one of the purposes is to describe the data obtained as true as possible to the original, to see things through the interviewees’ eyes, in this case through the eyes of the professionals (Denscombe, 2009). Together with the phenomenological position the hermeneutics position will be used to interpret the meaning of what has been said in interviews and text received from interviewees, to try and understand the meaning of what the interviewees are saying and see the meaning within a full context (Bryman, 2002 and Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). The rest of the chapter will describe the preliminary understanding, the two qualitative designs, selection of literature, the process of data with limitations and ethical considerations and finally the essay credibility.

4.1 Preliminary understanding
The interest of the subject of female criminal re-offenders arose as a lack of awareness for the connection between social work and criminality, as this connection has not been touched upon much within the study programme of social work specialization international social work. Through previous practical and work experiences the authors’ came in connection with the area of criminality and became aware of the difficulties and prejudices in society about criminal offenders and social integration. The authors had some prejudices of professionals’ different roles and work tasks in the work with social integration of female criminal re-offenders that is if adjusted support for the females really exists in practice. Both authors’ feel this subject is an important part of social work and needs to be more highlighted both within social work education programmes and practical social work.

4.2 Selection of literature
In the data collection databases Academic Search Elite, EBSCO host Discovery and PsycINFO that was found on the University of Gävle website, www.hig.se was used. In the journals found the reference lists were examined to find more relevant journals and books.
Were new relevant information was found the reference lists were always examined for new leads. Only articles and thesis that were peer-reviewed were studied. The words used for searches in different configurations were: female, offenders, re-offenders, criminal, social exclusion, social inclusion, re-integration, rehabilitation, incarcerated, convicts, recidivists, recidivism. Literature was searched for in LIBRIS and both older and newer literature was looked into. Google and Google Scholar were used for inspiration and to search at various official websites to find relevant information on the subject for example; United Nations, Home Office UK, Kriminalvården (Swedish Prison and Probation Service). From the vast material found emphasis was made on examples related to the subject with expectations to fulfil the aim of the study.

4.3 Mode of procedure

In this qualitative study information letters (Appendix 1) together with a certification letter from the supervisor (Appendix 2) were sent out to authorities and organizations working within the field of female criminal re-offenders with information about the study, as a way to find interviewees for face-to-face interviews and email correspondence. Six persons from different governmental authorities and non-governmental organizations agreed to participate in this study, see chart of interviewees (Appendix 3) for more details. Since we had earlier knowledge about which authorities and organizations that are working with this target group in society purposeful sampling was used to be able to have as relevant and “information-rich cases” from a wide spectra of interviewees as possible (Patton, 2002, p. 46). With intention to achieve a knowledgeable and purposeful sampling as possible a variety of professionals were interviewed with regards to the following criteria; working within an authority or an organization, geographical place of work, size of community where work is performed, profession and sex (Patton, 2002). In this study the two interview designs were used in combination. When preparing the interview guide (Appendix 4) focus was on having a connection to main and sub-questions together with the theoretical framework in order to ask questions that are relevant to the aim of the study. Below the procedure of the designs are presented.

4.3.1 Face-to-face interviews

Two semi-structured face-to-face interviews with professionals working with female criminal re-offenders have been conducted. The interviews were made at two places of work which comes in contact with situations concerning female criminal re-offenders social integration
into society. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were chosen to be used in this study as that could allow us to develop on any new interesting facts that could come up during the interview and a question could be repeated and reformulated to make sure interviewee understand the question. This choice and actions were taken as a way to ensure as high internal validity as possible (Bryman, 2002). Before the face-to-face interviews the interviewees were presented with a consent form (Appendix 5) which had to be signed to give official approval to the interview. The interviews were all recorded using an audio recorder as well as MP3-player in case either of them would fail. Additionally notes were taken on extra information and to capture body language. Each interview occasion took about 30-40 minutes. The processing of the data from the method of face-to-face interviews was conducted in three steps. First, the interviews were recorded on an audio recorder and MP3-player, second, the tapes were listened to and transcriptions were made and third, interpretations were started by trying to find patterns among the answers in the interviews. Coding was used in the third step as an aid to find a pattern and this was done by looking for specific words and/or statements of what was said in the interviews.

4.3.2 Email correspondence

By using email correspondence with four persons in the study we were able to get opinions from a broader spectrum of professionals working with female criminal re-offenders even if the interviewees were geographically far away or working in a closed work environment (Magne Holme & Krohn Solvang, 1991). Using email correspondence in combination with face-to-face interviews was to give the study stronger and more complete data. The interview document was constructed in such a way that it allowed for the interviewee to develop their answers in their own words. With the email correspondence further questions could be used to develop on interesting facts that might come up in the answers and interviewees were informed about the possibility to ask questions if anything was unclear. This choice and actions were taken as a way to ensure as high validity as possible. To be able to get consent from the interviewees of the email correspondence a special section at the beginning of the interview document was made where the interviewee had to tick a box for consent (Appendix 4). A consequence of doing email correspondence are that the face and body language cannot be observed and if further questions are needed to be asked a new email must be sent and the answer has to be waited upon. A limitation can also be if the interviewee has limited computer knowledge and/or difficulty to express themselves in “written communication” (Elmholdt, 2006 in Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 149). However the aspect of written
communication can also be a strength for some as they might be able to express themselves better in that way and is given more time to reflect on what to answer compared to in a face-to-face interview. In the processing of data from the method of email correspondence, the information received in the mail was copied into a new document where the name and personal details were taken away and instead a letter was used to identify the interview, this to de-personalize the document and keeping the anonymity of the interviewee (McCoyd & Schwaber Kerson, 2006). The new letter coded document was printed out and the original mail in the mailbox was deleted and the computer where the email was received was defragmented, this to be able to achieve as high confidentiality and anonymity as possible (ibid.). The letter coded documents with answers were then coded the same way as the face-to-face transcriptions with specific words and/or statements as a way to find a pattern in the answers received.

4.4 Ethical considerations

In research it is important to remember the ethical considerations throughout the whole research project, the ethical concerns should be the core of the attitudes that permeate the work conducted (Denscombe, 2009). The human rights are the foundation for ethical conduct, where “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world and implies obligations or responsibilities” (InterAction Council, 1997).

In this study the interviewees of the face-to-face interviews and email correspondence were informed that the interview process is voluntary, that the interviewees had the right to withdraw at any time from the study without explanation, that the information gained in the interviews is confidential and will only be used for this study alone. In the face-to-face interview part of the study, information about the study and the interviewees’ choice to take part or not was given orally at the time of the interview. In the email correspondence part of the study a letter of information (Appendix 1) about the study was attached to the interview document (Appendix 4) where the interviewees could get information about the study and the choice of participating or not. The interviewees in both methods of interviewing were also offered to have a copy of the report sent to them after it was completed and approved.

Consent has been asked for, when needed, from head of departments to conduct some of the interviews. The interviewees consent was also requested at the face-to-face interview occasion by getting the consent form (Appendix 5) signed after the interviewee was informed
about the study and agreeing to it. The consent by email was achieved by getting a written confirmation, tick in a box at the beginning of the interview document (Appendix 4), from the interviewees after having read the information about the study and agreeing to participate. Confidentiality for the interviewees were guaranteed in this study were the anonymity was reassured as any names of persons, authorities/organisations, places or other information would not be published that could be used to identify interviewees in the study. Therefore the actual occupational title and education of each interviewee has not been disclosed. We also informed the interviewees that the material transcribed or sent to us via email and later analysed in the study would be treated with confidentiality.

The interviewees of this study were informed that the data collected would be viewed only by us, the students performing the study, for researching purposes of this particular study and will not be used in any other studies, in any commercial way or for any other purposes.

4.5 Study’s limitations

As we are novices within the area of research and interviewing some limitations were detected during the work process when it came to the formulation of questions and interview design. As this study only consisted of professionals working with female criminal re-offenders of the age of 18 years and above the full target group was not reached, as authorities and organisations working with younger female criminal re-offenders was not represented. Some of the questions could have been formulated in a different way as they might not have been clear enough to understand and in that way not giving optimal answers. The email correspondence could have been organized in a different way, namely to divide the email correspondence into several occasions.

4.6 Essay credibility

Reliability

The notion of reliability is related to consistency and trustworthiness (Denscombe, 2009 and Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). To strengthen the reliability of the entire study, a combination of face-to-face interviews and email correspondence were used to be able to obtain a broader array of data and in that way trying to avoid a random result. Questions were carefully formulated, avoiding leading questions, to keep the neutrality and the objectivity of the questions asked and the result (Denscombe, 2009). The objectivity of the researcher is important in reliability to be able to give a result that is as fair and honest as possible (ibid.). Even if the researchers’ of this study have to some extent experience of the research area it
should not be that significant for it to have any larger impact on the result of the study. However, the researchers are novices in the field of interviewing and interpreting and therefore the reliability of the study can have been affected (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Details of the study’s design have been carefully documented to be able to keep the transparency of the study and making sure the study is reproducible if other researcher wishes to copy the study and in that way trying to strengthen the external reliability (Bryman, 2002). Both researchers have been collecting, coding and analysing the data of the study, in that way strengthening the internal reliability and trying to avoid biases in opinions and analysis as in triangulation of analysts (Patton, 2004 and Bryman, 2002). For the study quotes were translated from Swedish to English, which might have caused lower reliability due to difficulty to convey the actual, real meaning of what the interviewee has said as also the transcribing of interviews are a process of interpretation in itself (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

Validity
The notion validity is related to truthfulness, accuracy and quality (Denscombe, 2009). The social learning theory has been the basis in the research when developing the interview guide through to the analysis as a method to ensure the quality of work in the study and to interpret the data and results. The craftsmanship of the researcher is essential for validity throughout a research study (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). In this study the researchers have had a continuous process of verifying and questioning of for example interviewees understanding of interview questions, researchers understanding of the answers given to ensure internal validity (Bryman, 2002). Also the interviewees in the face-to-face interviews were given opportunity to express themselves verbally and/or with body language to be able to give the researchers a foundation to be able to present a thicker description of the data gathered (Patton, 2004). In the email correspondence the interviewees were given opportunity to freely express themselves in writing within each question by not limiting the length of the answer of by limiting what kind of language the interviewees use to give the answers, for example if a written or oral way of expressing themselves were used in the written answers given. However the researchers could have suggested the use of emoticons, “a representation of a facial expression such as a smile or frown, formed by various combinations of keyboard characters and used in electronic communications” to the persons using email correspondence as a way for them to express emotions more clearly (Oxford Dictionary, 2012b).
Generalizability

In this study with six interviews it is not possible to draw general conclusions to the research questions asked as in a statistical generalization. However an analytical generalization is possible to be made by using previous research as a way to be able to see similar patterns and in that way strengthen the results found (Kvale & Brinkman 2009).

5. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter the result of the study is shown and analyses are made with connections to theory and previous research found. Here three prominent patterns were found; factors, measures and role models. In relation to the main question the most important factors for social integration of female criminal re-offenders according to the interviewees will be presented. In connection to the sub question the measures that the interviewees believe should be focused upon in social integration for female criminal re-offenders will be presented. In previous research found for this study, role models for female criminal re-offenders to learn from are not put forward as a specific factor in the work with female criminal re-offenders. Hence in this study role models can be seen as an additional new important factor that needs to be acknowledged in the work towards social integration of female criminal re-offenders. The three themes factors, measures and role models with sub headings are presented below in table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Role models</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Something meaningful to do</td>
<td>Co-operation</td>
<td>Professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Community work</td>
<td>Positive role model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>Adjusted support</td>
<td>Genuinity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health/Drug and alcohol misuse</td>
<td></td>
<td>Motivation</td>
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5.1 Factors

The Social Exclusion Unit’s report from the UK has presented nine key factors that has an impact on the work with reducing re-offending, education, employment, drug and alcohol misuse, mental and physical health, attitudes and self-control, institutionalisation and life skills, housing, financial support and debt and family networks (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). From the answers given by the interviewees within the context of factors in this study, six out of these nine factors were more prominent. Four of these factors have by us been made into
two as it was found they were closely connected, education and employment became *something meaningful to do* and mental and physical health together with drug and alcohol misuse became *health/drug and alcohol misuse*. The other two prominent factors found were *housing* and *network*.

**Something meaningful to do**

The importance of having something meaningful to do is captured perfectly in the below quotation from interviewee A:

> I almost think that it is the difference between a success and a fiasco/…so it is really important. Really important. And it doesn’t have to be a job on the open labour market straight away but that it is something that can lead to something to do that is durable.

Interviewee B agrees on this and explains why it is important:

> For some it might be enough with something meaningful to do as they might not have the ability to work/…/they need something meaningful to do to keep it together and that can be enough.

Interviewee E also explains why it is important with something meaningful to do:

> It is easy to fall back [into criminal re-offending] if you don’t have anything to do.

According to the Social Exclusion Unit Report in the UK education and employment, which can be seen as something meaningful to do, are important factors in the work to prevent re-offending, research has shown that it can reduce the risk of re-offending up to as much as half (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). In line with UK, Sweden also sees the importance of the question of being able to make *something meaningful to do* more of a possibility as a way to prevent re-offending. This task is managed by the co-operation of the Swedish Public Employment Service and The Swedish Prison and Probation Service where the preparations start at an initial stage of the sentence (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2012). Especially for women it is important with something meaningful to do, like employment, to be able to feel non-dependent with regards to benefits and also a vital part in getting their autonomy, to gain higher self-esteem as that is according to research a specific female criminogenic need (Wilkinson in McIvor, 2004 and Blanchette, 2002).

The significance of the family history and attitude towards work/employment/education, something meaningful to do, seems to be of importance when it comes to a non-criminal life style versus a criminal life style. Interviewee A explains this further:

> That your custodians have had an occupation and gone to work and been earning their own money, have been more important than what they thought earlier, not just when it comes to material things but also socially and later significant for the development of that family.

Interviewee C is of the same opinion and can see a similar pattern in their clients:

> They have seldom been out on the labour marked or only for short periods of time.
In this case we can see a connection to the Social Learning Theory where a model might influence the choices a person makes. In this case the custodians might influence the person they are legally responsible for, which are in many cases minors, the custodians might influence which life style pattern the minors choose.

**Housing**

Housing is according to the interviewees a very important factor when it comes to integration into society and has to be acknowledged on different levels. Interviewee D and F highlight the personal level:

D: Housing- very big significance where the society many times put difficult and misdirected demands on the clients.

F: Housing is so much more important for women that they don’t have to have sex with men as a way to have somewhere to live; they will in that way be free of abuse and assault

Interviewee B empathize the personal level and also the municipality’s role:

Now they put the responsibility on the person/.../that she has to live at the local housing for the outcast, even if she feels that maybe she has got a different capacity/.../then she ends up at the bottom...then you really are at odds with the Social Services/.../yes it can be really different, even if they have the same rules and regulations to go by, it still differs.

Interviewee A describes the political and community perspective:

Politicians have been eager to/.../even if it is not your own contract, but it is your own housing that you have, it is not an institution, but an apartment integrated at a housing estate, it is still, this is difficult/.../it should be accepted, it should be people that you want to have as a neighbour. Like anybody at all, that I would like to have as a neighbour and it is not easy, not an easy equation.

According to the Social Exclusion Unit Report in UK, homelessness and access to housing on release from prison can prove to be difficult which in turn can have an effect on re-offending and accessing support services (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). It seems like housing benefit policies in different countries are not always beneficial for criminal offenders in the long run as prisoners can lose their housing during serving a sentence. The Swedish Government has a strategy against homelessness and to prevent exclusion regarding housing on national and local levels and has because of that a close co-operation with The National Board of Health and Welfare, The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning and The Swedish Prison and Probation Service (Regeringen, 2007).

Interviewee A and B describe that age can have an impact on housing. For young people to actually get their own place and for older people to get back into a place to live after serving a sentence:

A: We check if it is young women, young people, then you might for that reason go on and see if you can grant this person their own housing to be able for them to distant themselves, that is, get another life style.
B: Around 50-years old that is when it is difficult and it can be people that have not had any kind alcohol or drug misuse that has due to some kind of circumstances lost their apartment and are depending on the Social Services/…/that is when it might be difficult.

According to the interviewees and previous research the access to housing is a crucial factor when it comes to be able to live a non-criminal life style. The issue of affordable housing as a way to be able to make a break from an area, a life that has been destructive has also been pointed out in Canada and the USA as it proves to be difficult for many women to find housing that they can afford and to be able to fit into the “normal” society (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004 and Turnbull & Hannah-Moffat, 2009).

Network

To have a functioning and constructive network with family/friends is a fundamental base for social integration as there are for example people with non-existent or dysfunctional network or they have not an accessible network within close vicinity.

Interviewee E describes why it is important to have a network:
E: It is a long way to go and it is important that you have a network with people that you trust and that is always there for you.

Interviewee F describes the importance of a network in relation to self-esteem:
F: Women have a bigger need for positive network as they very often have been “rejected” by family and society because of their situation/…/many of women have almost no other network then the man.

Interviewee D agrees and describes how the network for criminal offenders can look like:
Network - very big/large significance as the social network to a great deal contains of other people in a similar life situation and where the contact with family and earlier drug-free friends have disappeared.

In Social Learning theory the person an observer model themselves primarily on for how to behave, are the people they mainly see and socialize with. In this case it might be difficult to change behaviour as the model you can observe is only a person with the same destructive life style as yourself.

Interviewee A describes why a network can be important but not accessible, seen from a geographical dimension:
Maybe it is not that they have given them up but they might be geographically far away and that makes a difference. If the woman is in X but the network is in another municipality far away, in some other country, then it is of significance and then you have to rely more on the authorities.

Interviewee A continues to explain the difficulty of network building and the significance of professionals in some client’s network:
Some network does sadly enough consist of authority people as a majority. Yes it is hard to build that up/…/The younger maybe the better chances, there still might be a network there, there might be relatives still in the picture, and you don’t have to rely only on authority people and professionals.
Reports from Australia, Canada and UK has emphasized that to be able to maintain and have access to constructive relationships with other than professionals, a network with family and friends can be of importance in order not to re-offend (Dowden & Andrews, 1999, Shinkfield & Graffam, 2007 and Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

**Health/Drug and alcohol misuse**

The factors of health and drug/alcohol misuse are connected to each other and are vital issues to be highlighted within the area of female criminal re-offending and integration, which is pointed out by interviewee D:

> All together the society have to act within a large number of areas to reduce re-offending but they have to prioritize the work with addictions as that is a requirement for other areas to be able to work.

Interviewee C can see a pattern of two different kinds of women depending on which socio-economic background they come from:

> For women [with weaker resources] the psychological health and network is very important, while for the women with strong resources is more about school/work, debts etc. I see two completely different types of women in front of me that needs different things. Even so free of addiction, housing and belonging comes first with both types. Which type they belong to depends on how “broken” they are, more than the age. How does their family live? How long have they had an addiction?

Interviewee A relates success of a life without drugs and criminal re-offending to something meaningful to do:

> Often it fails on work/something to do, because the day and night has many hours and if you are alone it becomes hard to stay out of addiction and not fall back into re-offending and a destructive behaviour.

According to statistics in both Sweden and UK around 50 percent of female criminal offenders have fundamental drug problems (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002 and Kriminalvården, 2004). In the light of the facts in the interviews and previous research found for this study, women who re-offend often use alcohol and drugs to assuage underlying earlier life experiences, using alcohol and drugs as a way to self medicate to suppress feelings and memories. This behaviour can be related to female criminogenic needs where for example low self-esteem and victimization as a child and/or adult can be the underlying reason for using alcohol and drugs (Blanchette, 2002 and Hollin & Palmer, 2006). From the material found in the interviews and previous research it can be seen that it is important to have knowledge of the specific female criminogenic needs, to find the factual underlying cause when a female commit a crime and is in addition an alcohol and/or drug user. If this is not acknowledged the female criminal offender might not get the adequate treatment and support she needs as many treatments are based on mens needs (Wilkinson in McIvor, 2004).
5.2 Measures

In this study the question of what measures are important to facilitate the best possible social integration into society of female criminal re-offenders, was put to the professionals to find out what they believe could be an optimal way to work. In previous research for this study limited information was found on this topic seen from the perspective of the professionals. Therefore we found this to be of greatest importance to investigate further. For female criminal re-offenders to get the best possible prerequisites in order to be reintegrated into society research has found that it is vital of “continuum of care” to be able for the female criminal re-offender to reconnect to a community and to get a continuous support not only during office hours (Bloom & Covington, 1998, p. 13). To make this possible there is a need of co-operation between authorities and organizations which might lead to extensive work within a community and in that way possibly being able to give better adjusted support to the female criminal re-offenders.

Co-operation

Co-operation is an important issue for all the interviewees, where politics can be a factor effecting the practical social work conducted. Interviewee A describes the importance of co-operation between authorities and other organizations:

One group that there is/…/they are important as a complement to us, are the voluntary organizations.

Interviewee A also points out that politicians’ need to bring forward questions connected social hierarchy, about women and their needs in society:

It is like the rest of society, women do not come first, not there either. We have limited methods where we know what works for women/…/maybe one needs to bring forward a group…to see what we can offer the women with criminal problems/…/it is harder for women. In general we have a lot of work left to do for that group.

Interviewee D also describes the role of society as provider of social support and highlights the influence of the economic framework:

The facilities of co-operation in society needs to be made even stronger and the costs that each authority have should be seen within a wider perspective than the budget of this year. The cost comes now and the savings comes later…

It has emerged in the interviews the importance of the political responsibility and involvement in co-operation. There is a need for example an overall authority to assure sustainable economic thinking, to assure a better co-operation between authorities and organizations as a way to complement each other regarding the needs for in this case female criminal re-offenders.
Community work

Community work in order to reintegrate female criminal re-offenders has shown to be an essential topic connected to reducing re-offending, even so in many countries it is not sufficient and this has also been confirmed from the interviewees of this study (Hedderman, 2012 and Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). Through the view of Social Learning theory we can see that the connection between environment, person and behaviour as in reciprocal determinism (see figure 1) is an important concept to understand. Interviewee A explains the practical aspect of this concept:

Normally you talk about heritance and environment, we see this concretely that, it has been research made on this as well, but we see it in our daily work, that families and people that have been in the books of this authority for a long time, tends to stay and that their children continue in the same footsteps.

Interviewee D confirms the history of a criminal career and verifies the progression of the young community members:

I feel that the younger part of the clients has increased the last few years. The social background often entails that the person is taken into custody in the teenage years (or earlier) when illness related to addiction has occurred in the family. A considerate number of the clients start taking drugs and being involved in criminality at young age, often in the early teenage years.

Interviewee C highlights the difficulty of integration into society:

The majority of ”our” women do not have the ability, or do not have admission to the “normal” life.

In Sweden with a social democratic welfare state, the role of the social worker has very much been concentrated in office work than in field work within the public sector. As society changes with time we might need to look at other countries approaches within social work, to for example be more visable within the community, in order to prevent in this case female criminal re-offending. Interviewee D states that there is a feeling of increase of young female criminal delinquents, therefore community work might be even more important when working with this target group and in that way to be better able to meet the clients different needs (Chesney-Lind, 2001 and Pierson, 2010). Social Learning theory explains that errors in a behaviour can be difficu to adjust, like for example having a criminal behaviour. Better possibilites for someone with a criminal behaviour might be given if a social worker is more visable within the community. For a social worker being out there on the field for example giving constructive feedback in order for someone to learn to make necessary adjustments to errors in their behaviour, in this case learning to live without a criminal life style.

Adjusted support

When we consider what Bergström (2009) is writing about and what Ahola (Ahola et al. in Ahola, 2010) is referring to in her research in Sweden that female offenders actually do not get the accurate level of punishment fitting the crime committed. This might lead to that the
female re-offender might not be able to get a support that is adjusted and right for them as an individual and be given the opportunity to make a break with a destructive pattern that is to stop re-offending. It was found in the interviews that most of the interviewees were thinking in similar patterns between crime and punishment. Interviewee E and F explain that it can take time before a woman’s criminal situation is noticed:

E: Many women manage to stay away from getting prison sentences for a long time. Women also find it easy to manipulate authorities. They often go out and continue with their old habits and no one has taken their time to sit down and talk to them to see how they really are feeling. Wish that Social Services could be more sensitive and look at the individuals and not just go by the rules and regulations.

F: I feel that the women end up in more severe misuse/criminality before their situation is noticed.

Interviewee A describes the possibilities of improvement within adjusted support:

A: That you get a situation adjusted support, that is where I feel we have big possibilities of improvement, because we often have all ready made actions that are more or less square and you are expected to fit into these actions that we can offer and nothing else.

Interviewee D defines the intricate situation of adjusted support and length of sentences:

D: The short sentences 1-3 months works more like life support the clients then get during a certain period of time housing, regular meals, access to health care which will give them a better physical condition and they thereby can continue with their addiction. Possibilities to change during serving a sentence for these clients are very limited. The question is if the sentences should be prolonged or if directions about care would be an alternative? Unfortunately directions about care many times mean that the clients abscond or discontinue the treatment and thereby do not assimilate the content of the treatment. Probably it might be better to put several short sentences into one or impose longer sentences when frequent re-offending occurs as a way to give these clients a possibility to reflect and start their work for change, even if longer sentences are generally not to be preferred.

An idea could be to increase the number of treatment wards within prisons with a more adjusted selection of available treatments and support to prevent the clients to abscond and discontinue community treatments. Also the combination of professionals working in authorities coming in contact with, in this case female criminal re-offenders could be adjusted to include all kinds of different professionals that complement each other, for example prison and probation officers, psychologists, social workers, pedagogues, nursing personnel working together as a close team. In Germany a combination of professionals is often used in the prisons, where social workers and other professions are employed as a team on each department, this is to establish a more solid team culture (Spitzcok von Brisinski, 2004). This way of working, close co-operations between professions might have a positive effect on social integration of female criminal re-offenders which has also been highlighted by Bloom and Covington in earlier research (1998). A good co-operation can already start within the prison and can be a basis for a continuous work within the community, a way to follow the rule of law and to give the client the best possible adjusted support and the same prerequisite independent of area of residence.
5.3 Role models

In the previous research found for this study the importance of the professionals and the gender composition of professionals working with female criminal re-offenders has not been highlighted to a great extent. We found this surprising and alarming as we believe the professionals should be a crucial factor and have a very important role to play working during and after a sentence for the social integration into society of female re-offenders. However in this study it was found that the interviewees believe that the professionals’ role, positive role models, genuinity and motivation together with a mixed gender composition of staff in the integration of female criminal re-offenders is important. Role models can be seen as a summary of expectations connected to a person, in this study for example professionals working with female criminal re-offenders.

Professionals

In this study we could see that the professionals value themselves and their experiences and knowledge as an important tool in the work with female criminal re-offenders. Interviewee B describes the need of knowledge and interviewee E states that hard work is vital for both professionals and clients:

B: We rely a lot on our own knowledge/…/you learn how to meet different people, how to ask questions, open, closed.

E: It needs hard work both from the women you work with and by us that give support.

A group of professionals that are of mixed gender is seen as the most optimal way of working with female criminal offenders as described by interviewee B and D:

B: A mixed group of staff is important, both women and men/…/it is important with positive role models that are male/…/sometimes it works better to talk to a man/…/women that have been victims to abuse needs to see another kind of male role model, a man whose behaviour is good and respectful, to be able to gain trust in men again.

D: How the staff treat and behave towards the women is important where the male staff in particular has a responsibility to act as positive role models when the clients have negative experiences from men with addiction and criminal behaviours.

As society is constructed with both men and women it also seems important to have positive role models from both genders in staff composition. This to be able for the women to have an opportunity to repair, to rethink, the patterns learnt from behaviours in a particular social context that is to be able to find new role models from both gender to learn from. These findings in our interviews expressed by both female and male professionals are in contrary to the findings in one of the journals in previous research from the USA, where they state the importance of only female staff, especially in the work with physically and sexually abused women (Koons et al, 1997).
Positive role model

In the interviews we could see a pattern that positive role models are found important for female criminal re-offenders to model themselves on as in the Social Learning theory of learning through modeling. Positive role models can for example be professionals, family and/or friends. It was also found that some of the interviewees think that people with similar criminal problematic experiences might be vital as role models:

A: When it is about women who re-offend, I believe that it is about positive role models as well, then I don’t mean authorities at first hand/to see that there are possibilities to make a break and see something else, that life can be different. And that maybe one can get from positive role models.

B: I think positive role models are important/she was a drug addict and had been using drugs for many, many years and she made a turn and got help and got treatment and work at a rehabilitation place and now goes out/talking about her journey/it might raise some hope with clients that don’t think they can do it and sees that, yes, if she can do it maybe I can too.

It seems like a combination of positive role models that complement each other might be necessary for female criminal re-offenders in the work towards reducing re-offending. This might not always be an achievable scenario as for example there might be a lack of family and friends network for a woman, this network can be a destructive network with no positive role models but even if there is a working network with positive role models there might be the issue of distance to the network within a country or even outside a country. In these cases the professionals and for example other people with the same experiences will need to have a more prominent role as models to be able for the women to receive sufficient support and feedback, someone to learn from as described in Social Learning theory.

Genuinity

It can be of importance to find an entrance gate to a good relationship between the professionals and the female criminal re-offenders through talking of topics of interest and importance for the client. To be able to have a good relationship is about remembering to behave with the intent not to judge a person and not add any of your personal values to a situation, to be authentic, to be genuinely interested and meet the person with respect and in that way gain the clients trust. Interviewee C and A describes the importance of being genuine in interaction with the clients:

C: I believe that it is important to have a close and personal contact/give of yourself, your strenghts and weaknesses in the contact with the women. Talk a lot and show interest in their wishes and what they want.

A: That someone sort of spontaneously, that the social worker called their home at a time that was not booked and expressed that she was seriously worried about me and my drinking. That was something that started some kind of process with these people.
In a report from the UK it was shown that staff genuinity and interest was highly valued by the clients (Ministry of Justice, 2008b). This might give the clients a feeling of being seen, and in that way develop a sense of trust towards the professionals which can in turn provide a kind of strength to deal with their situation (Hedderman et al. in Ministry of Justice, 2008b). In this case maybe one can see the professionals as the environment, that is one of the cornerstones in the triangle of reciprocal determinism (see figure 1). Within the Social Learning theory, the environment, in this case the professionals, can have effect on the person, the client, and the clients behaviour by being genuine, showing a real interest, gaining trust, giving strength to the client and in that way interacting with the client in order for the client to develop belief in their own capacity, self-efficacy.

**Motivation**

Motivation can be a vital key for clients to be able achieve a change of life style. For a client to gain motivation the trust in the professionals needs to be there, that the clients can feel they are receiving empathy and in that way are more open for motivational work as in the method of conversation, motivational interviewing (MI) (Farbring, 2010). The interviewees believe that they can give female criminal re-offenders motivation. Interviewee A describes the method they use:

I think we can contribute with motivation work. To entice, with the method, motivational interviewing/…/we want that you change for your own sake.

Interviewees E and D disagree on whom, with regards to age, are the easiest to motivate:

E: It is hard to get back into society again if you are not taken seriously, it feels like nobody trusts you, it takes real courage and a strong will to put the cards on the table and admit that you haven’t been honest/…/if we can reach the women in early age it is easier to motivate them. Older women often stop when they have hit the bottom and often look for help themselves.

D: Of course there is a difference in age/…/where there often is a problem that younger clients have less motivation to change their life situation as they feel the consequences are not that serious yet. The longer you have been an addict, the more consequences and thereby more motivation.

Age and motivation, in this case relate to female criminal re-offending, seems to be a debatable subject. Chesney-Lind (2001) argues in line with interviewee E and claims that prevention work needs to be started at early ages. From the material found in the interviews it can be seen that is not only about age but also about readiness for change. Vital is then the availability of support, for example from professionals, that support is present whenever it is needed. In connection to the Social Learning theory we can then understand that the combination of motivation and positive feedback as in the motivational process is applicable in the practical social work when working with female criminal re-offenders to be able to reduce re-offending and support the women in a life style change.
6. DISCUSSION

The purpose with this study was to investigate how professionals in Sweden working with female criminal re-offenders conceive the social integration into society for this target group. This has been performed by conducting qualitative face-to-face interviews with two persons and email correspondence with four persons purposely selected from different authorities and organizations. Analyses of the material were based on the Social Learning theory and previous research.

In this study three prominent patterns were found; factors, measures and role models. Within the context of the main question of what factors the professionals think are most important in the work for social integration into society for female criminal re-offenders four factors were identified; something meaningful to do, housing, network and health/drug and alcohol misuse. Within the context of the sub question of what measures the professionals believe could be an optimal way to work towards social integration into society for the female re-offenders three themes were identified; co-operation, community work and adjusted support. Additionally to these two patterns we could see a third pattern crystallized, namely role models. Within this pattern four themes were identified; professionals, positive role model, genuinity and motivation.

It has been confirmed in this study as well as in previous research that female criminal re-offenders are not a prioritized group within society. Criticism could be put to society that there still seems to be limitations for women when it comes to having equal opportunities to be able to become socially included after committing crimes. Previous research has pointed out the importance to consider specific female needs within the work for social integration and prevention of re-offending by female criminals. To encounter the specific needs of women it is important that the professionals working with women are aware of that these needs might have to be considered. Together with the specific needs we believed that age and culture could be important aspects in the work conducted with female criminal re-offenders. In this study the interviewees could see that the age is of some importance, where it seems to be more difficult for older female criminal re-offenders to integrate. However the aspect of culture was not something that was highlighted, which we found surprising, but maybe it could be that culture is not something one deals with initially when other basic fundamental issues like health and housing have to be dealt with first. It also seems important that the professionals need to have a genuine interest in their work as a way to become a positive role model for the female criminal re-offenders and can in that way motivate the women to break
the pattern of a destructive life style. In this study the approach of the professionals from both genders can be seen as a basis in the work with the women. The importance of having female and also male staff has in this study been brought forward which is an aspect that has not been highlighted in earlier research found for this study. For the professionals to be able to accomplish their work factors that are important for the individual need to be identified together with the women. Factors can vary for each individual woman even if it seems that in most cases access to something meaningful to do, housing, network and support with health/drug and alcohol misuse are factors to contend with. For the professionals to be able to perform their work tasks the society also has a responsibility when it comes to how the authorities and organizations should co-operate to be able to achieve the best possible solutions to prevent women from re-offending. Co-operation needs to be on all levels in society and for example be made more visible in their work in the community and in that way give the female criminal re-offender a more accessible and adjusted support. Additional to the important work of the professionals we believe that a factual, adjusted judicial punishment fitting the crime and individual situation might be of significance in the work for social integration into society and prevention of female criminal re-offending. It seems that female criminals with no sentence or short sentences imposed will have none or limited access to treatments and support from professionals, which can then diminish their chances to break a destructive life pattern such as a criminal life style.

By using the Social Learning theory in this study the results of the interviews were made more descriptive and comprehensible. A challenge has been to use, for us, a theory that has not been much highlighted within our social work programme but was found to be of importance in the previous research found for this study. As we also find that learning processes are important within a social work context this theory seemed like a relevant choice for the study. The Social Learning theory could give the results a perspective of the significance of learning and re-learning processes within the work to prevent or change destructive life styles. The theory could also be used to understand the importance of having role models to learn from, these role models could for example be professionals. Role models ought to be genuinely interested in a person and the task at hand, to be able to motivate and give feedback with the aim to achieve a life style change for the person in need.

An interpretation of the results of this study with relation to the Social Learning theory and previous research found can therefore be that professionals have a crucial role to play in co-operation with the society on all levels in the work for the best possible social integration into society for female criminal re-offenders.
Even if the study gives answers to the main and sub question with additional findings being identified questions can be raised if the result would be similar if a study was conducted with different professionals within the same or even other authorities and organizations. This could for example depend on the authorities or organizations work policy and how the individual takes on the assignment, how they relate and keep to the work policy. It was also not possible to involve all actors working with female criminal re-offending and therefore not being able to give a complete picture of this area. An additional interesting aspect would have been to include interviews with people on the governmental level as well as within the judicial area in terms of getting a wider perspective of the possibilities given for professionals to conduct their work.

### 6.1 Further research

As women and as in this study female criminal re-offenders are not a homogeneous group, we believe there is a need for further research as they are a disadvantaged group. We believe that further research could for example be in a study about the integration of female criminal re-offenders into society but on a larger scale with interviews with actors, professionals and female criminal re-offenders using qualitative and quantitative methods. Research also needs to be made across the borders, that is between countries with different political perspectives, cultures and welfare systems, to be able to exchange knowledge about for example culture and effects on different age groups, in that way benefit from each other’s knowledge and experiences, academic and practical, to be able to apply the international knowledge on national and community levels.
7. REFERENCES

Literature & Electronic sources


United Nations (2012b). DESA & ECOSOC. Retrieved April 13\textsuperscript{th}, 2012: 


Theoretical Perspectives]. Stockholm: Stockholm University.

Interviews and correspondence

Interviewee A. (2012). Face-to-face interview.

Interviewee B. (2012). Face-to-face interview.

Interviewee C. (2012). Email correspondence.

Interviewee D. (2012). Email correspondence.

Interviewee E. (2012). Email correspondence.

Interviewee F. (2012). Email correspondence.
Appendix 1

Letter of Information

Hello,

We are two students studying for a degree in Bachelor of Science in Social Work at the International Programme for Social Work at Högskolan in Gävle, which is a university in Sweden [http://www.hig.se/Ext/Sv/Verktyg-i-hoger/In-English.html](http://www.hig.se/Ext/Sv/Verktyg-i-hoger/In-English.html). During this spring 2012 we will write our C-essay about *Female re-offenders and their integration process into society*.

In connection to this study we need to make some interviews with personnel who are working in different authorities and organizations with this particular target group.

Our goal with this study is to see how the personnel experience the integration process into society for women that re-offend. We hope to highlight possible factors that are experienced as important but also point out which difficulties there can be in this process to minimize re-offending.

We send this invitation to your organization with hope to be able to make an interview via email with one of your personnel that are working with these questions. We are searching for answers to some questions related to the subject of the essay and we find that it would be valuable to be able to take part of experiences and reflections on the subject that your personnel have. The participation is voluntary and the participant can at anytime terminate the involvement in the interview. The information given in the interview will be treated with confidentiality; it will be anonymous and will not to be used in any other form than for this study alone.

We believe that the knowledge we gain from your participation will be of great use for future understanding of factors that are important for female re-offenders and their integration process into society.

If you would like to require a copy of the finished essay please contact us on the above email address.

Thank you in advance.

Kind regards

Ann-Christin Badal & Kristina Freimuth
Appendix 2

Certification

Lecturer in Social Work
Mats Sundin

CERTIFICATION
14 March 2012

To whom it concerns

I, as teacher and supervisor, hereby certify that the Swedish students Ann-Christin Badal and Kristina Freimuth write a Bachelor's essay on the topic social work. Their study of reintegration of recidivist female offenders into society is an utmost certainty theme to learn more about for development and improve of the welfare of vulnerable groups. Therefore, I look confidently forward to providing the ambitious students with access to your organization, both to carry out their study and contribute to a better society.

In service

Mats Sundin

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Akademrin för hälsa och arbetsliv
Avdelningen för socialt arbete och psykologi
+46-26-645081, massun@hig.se
Appendix 3

Chart of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Place of work</th>
<th>Years in this profession</th>
<th>Way of interviewing</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Email</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the background questions in the interview guide was education, but we have chosen not to show this data as it then might be possible to identify the interviewee as person and their place of work.
Appendix 4

Interview Guide

Questions

I have had information about the study and I know that I can terminate my involvement in the interview at any time, I approve that both students have access to the information gained from the interview.

By putting a tick in the box I give my consent. ☐

Information

The first part begins with four background questions. This is followed by the second part with seven interview questions. Please, put the cursor in the gray field, the table will automatically expand when you write.

Part 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background questions</th>
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<td>Age:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Years in this profession:</td>
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</table>

Part 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe the women you work with. For example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ethnical background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Age (for ex. are they teenagers, or in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s or 60+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Additional info</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 2

Describe how your present ways of working with women who re-offend are working? What works well/what can be improved?

Question 3

Describe the factors YOU believe are important for women to be able to have, for the women, a good integration into society and not re-offend?

Describe the significance of the following factors:
- Education
- Employment
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Mental and physical health
- Attitudes and self-control
- Institutionalisation
- Life skills
- Housing
- Financial support and debt advice
- Network (family, friends, leisure activities etc)

Which factors do YOU believe are the most important one/s?

Has age and cultural background any significance in the above factors, if so, how?

Question 4

How do you work at your place of work with the women’s social background (for ex. childhood experiences, age, culture) and criminal experiences to be able to bring about a change in the women’s life, i.e. for them to stop re-offending?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you co-operate with other authorities/organizations within Sweden to facilitate the process of integration into society?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you co-operate with other authorities/organizations in other countries to facilitate the process of integration into society when for ex. a woman has to return to her native country?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which interventions and ways of working do you believe are significant when working for a positive behaviour change in work together with the women that re-offend (for ex. positive role models, personnel, treatments, motivation work etc)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you believe the justice system effect the integration process into society for women who re-offend? Are changes needed, are the sentences adjusted to the crime committed?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5

Consent Form

Consent

I have had information about the study and I know that I can terminate my involvement in the interview at any time, I approve that both students have access to the information gained from the interview. I also give permission for this interview to be recorded.

Date
______________

Signature interviewee
______________________________
Clarification of signature
____________________________________

Signature responsible interviewer
______________________________
Clarification of signature
____________________________________