

STATEMENT OF BARBARA OWEN, Ph.D.

CHAIRMAN WALTON: Dr. Owen.

DR. OWEN: I'm trying to be sensitive to the need, the time for questions.

My colleagues here have pointed out the gendered harm that occurs to women in prison. And I have an article I'll submit as part of my testimony for that.

I'd like to point out that the National Institute of Corrections and The Moss Group is focusing on girls and women this year, in particular we're analyzing some data we collected from staff in female institutions, and we'll be talking about the difficulty staff have in recognizing or making a distinction between some of these more predatory or harmful relationships among the women, as well as some of the staff sexual-misconduct issues.

I need to stress again that understanding women's pathways to prison and the notion of prison culture and its role in -- prior victimization, we need to understand the role of prior victimization in fully addressing sexual violence against women and among women.

I'm going to skip a lot of my remarks because they follow much of my colleagues, but I'd like to talk a little bit about how little we know about predatory sexual behavior between women.

I'm becoming more and more convinced that we

know very little. In my own work, I did not ask specific questions about predatory sexual behavior either from staff or women, and it's something I think we need to think about.

But I do believe that the continuum which starts out with consensual sexual behavior, seduced behavior, pressured behavior, coerced, forced, violence and assault has many more complications for women and girls than it does men, and we need to understand that complexity.

I think there's much more subtle forms of sexual violence between the women. I do believe that full sexual assault, again using a male definition, is rare among the women. But I think just as Ms. LaBelle pointed out, there are expectations of privacy and there's broader definitions of what a sexual violation is, again because of gender. Essentially, we need to know much more.

I'd like to add some more description about staff sexual misconduct. The male gaze cannot be underestimated in understanding that men, whether it's biological, whether it's socialized, whether it's culture, look at women. And when you have men in a correctional environment, particularly in these zones of nonprivacy Ms. LaBelle just described, you have to deal with the male gaze.

I think we need constantly emphasize the power that staff have over inmates, and at the same

time we can't only concentrate on the men. Staff sexual misconduct is a systemic issue. There are reports of women staff, female staff, abusing female inmates. We also have reports in male prisons of staff sexual misconduct. So, again, taking a gendered point of view pushes you beyond the narrow stereotype of males hurting women. While I suspect that's probably the most frequent form, it's not the only form.

The research of staff sexual misconduct defines misconduct in a couple of different ways. Sexual trading, the commodification Ms. Levi described in terms of trading for phone calls, trading for visits, trading for medical access. Again, part of the sexual history in the community is using sex as a commodity. It continues in the prison, and it's supported by officer behavior, sexual coercion and violence and also what the literature calls oversearching.

We need to pay attention to not only cross-gender searching, but searching protocols in general. Some of my interviews, and I suspect some of Ms. LaBelle's, have found that female officers are also guilty of oversearching, often called sexual misconduct in the line of duty.

I need to emphasize that very often women are required to report their abuse to their abuser as part of the grievance procedure. That's the first person in line. And, again, the systemic approach

that staff sexual misconduct has received also can be translated to PREA.

I'm going to close here, but one of the other things I think is important -- and we'll go back to the relational context -- is that information/knowledge we've gained from the domestic-violence literature needs to be applied to PREA, that there's sexual violence among the women, again, in this larger continuum that I think occurs during -- in the context of a relationship. But we're also finding out that's true for the men, that there's domestic violence in their sexual violence too.

Again, to conclude, we need know more about the gendered context of violence against and among incarcerated females, both youth and juveniles.

I would return to my remarks that PREA gives us an opportunity to introduce another dimension of humanity into an environment that sorely lacks it.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WALTON: Thank you.