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THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF 'BAD GIRLS' AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM: A COMPARISON OF THE CLAIMS-MAKING ACTIVITY OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS EXPERTS AND PRINT JOURNALISTS

Submitted to the Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

ABSTRACT

This study examines the social construction of girls' violence and gang involvement as a social problem by print journalists and social problems experts (namely social scientists) as claims-making groups. The issue of girls' violence and gang involvement has recently received great attention in the public eye due to increased exposure in the news media. However, social scientists and other experts have also been at the fore of claims-making about this issue. As a result of varying interests, this issue has been constructed by two sets of claims-makers (print journalists as media representatives, and social problems experts) in two different ways. This study will also discuss the relationship between print journalists and social problems experts, as the media and social problems experts are not mutually exclusive groups: the claims of experts are presented in both media publications and professional fora and are conveyed differently in terms of their content and context.

Content analysis, guided by the contextual social constructionist perspective, was the research method used to describe the rhetoric used by each claims-making group in their constructions of this issue as a social problem. The content analysis involved the scanning of samples including sources from the Canadian print media and social scientists published in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Due to the current heightened attention this issue has received, these three decades were chosen to present the various claims made about girls' violence and gang involvement by print journalists and social problems experts in recent years.

This study reveals the different constructions of girls' violence and gang involvement as a social problem, and the interests and agendas which influence print media clams-making and the claims-making by social problems experts in professional fora. This research also explores the relationship between print media and expert claimants, the impact these groups have on public perception and social policy, and the implications differing constructions have for young offenders in Canada.

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INTRODUCTION

On November 14, 1997, a fourteen-year-old girl was found drowned in a waterway in the peaceful community of Saanich, British Columbia. Reena Virk was the victim of a brutal attack by eight youths as a result of a dispute over whether she had been spreading rumours about some of her fellow students. The dispute began at a party, when someone stubbed a lit cigarette out on Virk's forehead. Virk was subsequently met by two other youths who then broke her arms so that she could not swim, and left her in a nearby river to drown. One of Virk's attackers was a boy - seven were girls (Toronto Star, Nov. 25, 1997: A2). This kind of detailed introduction to an event, called a 'grabber', is a technique commonly used by the journalists to introduce a problem to the public by playing on their emotions, and subsequently holding their interest (Best, 1990: 28). Due to the involvement of seven girls in the beating death of Reena Virk, this current case is frequently being used by the Canadian print media to support the claim of a recent increase in girls' violence and brutality. Newspaper stories reporting on the details of the Reena Virk case have been accompanied by several articles in a variety of newspapers which make claims about the growing volume of girls' brutality, violence and gang involvement in Canadian cities. The content of these articles, as well as the content of various publications authored by social problems experts, will be analyzed in this thesis to determine the various kinds of claims being made about girls' violence and gang involvement today. This analysis will highlight the social construction of this phenomenon by social problems experts[1] and print journalists[2] as different but inter-related claims-making groups.

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[1] The term 'social problems experts' refers to a broad range of professionals (psychiatrists, lawyers, sociologists, criminologists, social workers, etc.) who deal with social problems and are consulted by the media to provide related knowledge. In this study, social scientists (sociologists, criminologists, psychologists) will be singled out from this group of professionals, as they are those experts who make the most claims about girls' violence and gang involvement. The claims-making of these social problems experts in professional fora (books and social science periodicals) will be analyzed in comparison to that of print journalists with respect to the nature of girls' violence and gang involvement. I will be using the more general term 'social problems

This thesis comes at a time of great concern regarding the nature and volume of crime that youth are committing, and public outcry regarding the efficacy of the Young Offenders Act as a deterrent. The topic of youth violence has recently been given extensive attention in the news media and has been addressed in academic circles as a social problem (Artz, 1998: v). In recent years, the issue of girls' violence and involvement in gangs in particular has been singled out in both public and academic discussions of youth crime. Several social scientists link girls' levels of violence to gang settings (Campbell, 1990; Chesney-Lind, Shelden and Joe, 1996; Harris, 1988; Messerschmidt, 1995; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996), and print journalists frequently link 'increases' in girls' violence to increases in the number of girl gangs (Maclean's, Dec. 8, 1997; Vancouver Sun, Dec. 1, 1997; Toronto Star, Dec. 10, 1996; Calgary Herald, Sept. 14, 1995; Globe & Mail, Sept. 12, 1995). The acts of violence to which social problems experts and print journalists often refer range from minor assault (level one), to assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level two), and to aggravated assault (level three) (Doob and Sprott, forthcoming).

The interconnected issue of girls' violence and gang involvement has been addressed in the past, but discussions of this issue seem to be occurring more frequently, and appear to be heading in new directions. In the past, researchers on female delinquency were asking the question "why is it that girls offend so little in comparison to boys?". More recently, many researchers have begun to ask "why is it that this gap between girls and boys is closing?". The research on girls' gang involvement has followed this pattern as well, as in the past, social

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experts' interchangeably with the terms 'social scientists' and 'expert claimants' throughout the thesis to refer to this group of expert claims-makers and their professional interests.

[2] In this study, the claims-making activity of print journalists will be singled out of the other possible media fora (television, radio), and the content of their claims about the nature of girls' violence and gang involvement will be analyzed and compared with those of social problems experts. Throughout the study, I will be using the terminology of 'print journalists' and 'print media (claimants)' interchangeably to refer to this group of claims-makers as representatives of media organizations, and the interests this group considers when making claims. The media, of course, often make use of social problems experts in presenting claims, but the content and rhetorical style of such claims tends to be different and will be discussed.

problems experts (notably social scientists) viewed girls largely as auxiliary members of boys' gangs who rarely committed offences of their own. The role of the girl was as a girlfriend or sexual object, weapon and drug carrier, or lookout (Thrasher, 1927; Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Short & Strotdbeck, 1965). Recently, social problems experts have begun to view girls in gangs as increasingly independent from boys, and increasingly involved in *serious* offences (Chesney-Lind, Shelden & Joe, 1996; Campbell, 1990; Harris, 1988; Taylor, 1993; Adler, 1975). A similar development in the image of girls' violence and gang membership can be noted in the media. From the 1920s to the 1960s, girl gang members were depicted in the media and popular culture as playing an auxiliary role to boys in gangs, and again were thought to rarely engage in serious offences. Recently, however, girl gang members have been portrayed by the media, and especially by print journalists, as both more independent and more *brutal and violent* (Chesney-Lind, Shelden, & Joe, 1996). Thus, social problems experts and print journalists currently present varying images of girls' violence and gang involvement, and some of these images compete and clash in current discussions of these issues.

1. Theoretical Perspective:

Best (1995: 6) states that "our sense of what is or is not a social problem is a product", which has been constructed through the activities of making claims about a putative condition. The variation in the claims about girls' violence and gang involvement presented by social problems experts and print journalists over time, as well as the increasing frequency with which this issue is entering into print media and expert discourses, highlight the social construction of this issue as an inter-connected social problem.

In this thesis, I analyze the phenomenon of girls' gang involvement and violence from a social constructionist perspective. Social problems experts and print journalists will be treated as powerful claims-makers who have presented a variety of claims about girls' violence and gang

involvement over the years. Social problems experts will be considered largely as primary claims-makers, as they possess special knowledge about the social condition, and frequently make claims to bring about a solution to that social condition which they perceive to be harmful. Print journalists will be referred to as secondary claims-makers, as they sometimes restate the claims of social problems experts, but also have the ability to translate and shape the appearance of these claims, thus conveying their own claims about the harmful social condition (Best, 1989: 260).

It has been suggested that when writing news stories, print journalists are in consideration of such corporate interests as promoting interest and thus profit by entertaining, and avoiding legal action (Best, 1989: 277). It has also been argued that social problems experts are influenced by professional interests in their work, as some may alter their research findings in compliance with the interests of their employers, as well as to advance their personal careers (Berger & Kellner, 1981: 128). The possibility that the claims-making activity of these two groups is affected by their individual interests will also be discussed.

As claims-makers, social problems experts and print journalists may have an intimate relationship with each other. In discussions of girls' violence and gang involvement as a social problem, these two influential groups are sometimes at odds with each other and may present differing images in different fora about the nature of this phenomenon.

2. Historical Context:

An examination of academic theories of female delinquency demonstrates an evolution in the definitions of the nature of the female delinquent. Earlier theories [e.g. Thomas (1923), Cowie, Cowie and Slater (1968), Konopka (1966)] defined the female delinquent as a sexual deviant prone to the commission of such status offences as truancy, incorrigibility, waywardness, immorality and prostitution (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992). More recent theories depart from

the view of the female delinquent primarily as a sexual deviant, and view her as being involved in more serious offences such as assault, theft and robbery (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992).

The same evolution of thought has occurred in theories and explanations of girls' involvement in gangs. The studies on youth gangs of the 1920s and 1950s conducted by Thrasher (1927), Cohen (1955), and Cloward and Ohlin (1959), basically addressed male gangs and included little or no information on girl gangs (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992; Leonard, 1982). In the early 1970s, Miller conducted a study of girl gangs and stated that most of these gangs were auxiliary to male gangs, and the girls primarily committed status offences (Miller, 1973). From the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, several social scientists began arguing that independent, all-girl gangs existed, and that gang members were engaging in more serious offences (Adler, 1975; Shacklady Smith, 1978; Giordano, 1978; Gora, 1982). Gradually, researchers began paying more attention to the female gang, and isolated it as the site of girls' involvement in more serious offences.

A recent approach to research on the female gang used by many social scientists involves the close investigation of the lives of the girls' in order to understand the factors which attract girls to gangs. Some of these social scientists have discovered that many of the girls involved in gangs have histories of physical and sexual abuse (Campbell, 1990; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996; Messerschmidt, 1995; Moore & Hagedorn, 1996; Moore, 1991; Artz, 1998). This is not surprising in that research based on samples from the general American population, indicate that approximately 70% of victims of sexual abuse are female (Finkelhor and Baron (1986) cited in Chesney-Lind, 1997: 25). Chesney-Lind (1997: 25) contends that girls are more likely to be the victims of child sexual abuse than boys, that the sexual abuse of girls starts earlier than that of boys, and that girls are more likely to be assaulted by a family member. Messerschmidt (1995: 175) states that this abuse is more prominent among girls who are delinquent, as "alarmingly high rates of physical and sexual abuse have been reported for

delinquent girls, ranging from a low of 40 percent to a high of 73 percent". Joe and Chesney-Lind (1996: 164) state that three-quarters of the girls in their sample of thirteen girl gang members, reported having been physically abused, and 62% had been sexually abused, while only 55% of the boys reported physical abuse in their sample of thirty-five. These American researchers have also found that the girls in gangs, as well as boys, came from low socio-economic backgrounds (Campbell, 1990; Chesney-Lind, Shelden & Joe, 1996; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996; Messerschmidt, 1995; Moore & Hagedorn, 1996; Harris, 1988; Moore, 1991).

All of these social scientists claim that the gang provides these girls, and boys, with support and a method of coping with their dismal lives of abuse and poverty. They have observed that due to poor economic conditions in their communities and the resultant lack of organized activities and services for youth, these girls, as well as boys, seek out gang involvement as a cure for boredom and an opportunity for socializing. They also claim that the gang serves as a surrogate family to help the girls cope with and protect themselves from abuse, violence and tension in the home and community (Campbell, 1990; Chesney-Lind, Shelden & Joe 1996; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996; Messerschmidt, 1995; Moore & Hagedorn, 1996; Harris, 1988; Moore, 1991). The majority of these researchers reject the "liberation hypothesis" for explaining gang involvement. This hypothesis argues that gang involvement is consciously sought out by girls as a means of combatting the stereotypical female role, as influenced by the Women's Movement (Chesney-Lind, Joe & Shelden, 1996). Instead of supporting this explanation, these researchers focus on socio-economic conditions as causes of girls' gang involvement and violence.

Recently, certain social scientists have also argued that female offenders have been misrepresented by both social science theories and by media representations. They agree that girls' and women's crime have been oversimplified and sexualized in past theories (Campbell, 1990; Chesney-Lind, Shelden & Joe, 1996; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996; Messerschmidt, 1995; Shacklady Smith, 1978; Taylor, 1993). Furthermore, some claim that the media sensationalize

and exaggerate particular incidents of violence by girls (Chesney-Lind, Shelden & Joe, 1996; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996; Moore & Hagedorn, 1996; Pate, 1997; Shacklady Smith, 1978). These researchers contend that it is the media which aid in the creation of a false perception about the emergence of a new violent female offender. They argue that the media help in this construction by giving the impression that girls are increasingly committing offences which do not fit the stereotypical view of the female delinquent as a sexual deviant. Chesney-Lind (1997), Chesney-Lind, Shelden and Joe (1996), and Canadian researchers Reitsma-Street (1993) and Doob and Sprott (forthcoming) have recently analyzed some of the official statistics quoted by the American and Canadian media which indicate that the rate of violent offending by girls is increasing dramatically. These researchers have found that the claims made by the media that girls are becoming more violent offenders are not supported by criminal justice statistics as the estimates of the problem's extent are often exaggerated or not explained adequately in this fora.

The claim made by certain social scientists that the media are responsible for the current public concern and confusion over the nature and volume of girls' offences, pits them against print media claims and the social problems experts whose statements are used as support. In order to understand this conflict, it is important to look at what it is that print journalists have asserted about girls' violence and gang involvement in the past and the present. In the past, the image of girl gangs and their levels of violence produced by the media and popular culture was congruent with the one created by social scientists in professional publications (see Rice, 1963). However, this image of strictly male-controlled gangs was presented more often in such period films as *West Side Story* and *Grease* than reported by the print media. In examining the headlines in some late 1970s Canadian newspapers, I found that girl gangs and girls' violence were mentioned rarely, if at all. I only found two articles addressing female delinquency in general during this time period (Canadian Index, 1977, 1978, 1979).

If one examines the headlines of articles discussing this issue published in Canadian newspapers and magazines of the 1990s, journalists are now claiming that girls are becoming more violent, and are involved in more gang activity. Examples of these headlines include the following: "Female gangs real problem in Ottawa" (Calgary Herald, July 23, 1992, p.C6), "Brutal girls are new kids in world of violent crime" (Calgary Herald, Dec. 1, 1995, p.B8), "Girls in Gangs...Girls turning more violent" (Toronto Star, Dec. 10, 1996, p.C1, C2), and more recently "Bad Girls: The brutal murder of Reena Virk, 14, sounds alarm about rising violence among teenage girls" (Maclean's, Dec. 8, 1997).

The girls in gangs reported on by the Canadian print media typically are not portrayed as being involved in gangs and violent behaviour as a way of coping with a dismal life in a dispossessed community. Print journalists quote certain social scientists, police officers, and social workers who claim that this increasing aggression is occurring because girls today are no longer seeing themselves as passive victims and are copying aggressive male behaviour, or are fighting over boys: "...aggression by girls is mainly a matter of competing for boys" and "...some girls are trying on the masculine style of in-your-face confrontation. Why? Probably because girls are thinking: It's okay now, if you're female to be demonstrably angry" (Globe & Mail, Nov. 29, 1997: D5). The Canadian print media have been framing the issue of girls' violence and gang involvement, in light of the Reena Virk case, as a new and shocking phenomenon, as violent behaviour by girls is in violation of the traditional female role of passivity: "Le crime [the beating death of Reena Virk] avait largement retenu l'attention en raison du sexe- féminin - des personnes soupçonnées de l'avoir commis" (Le Soleil, 9 fév., 1998: A10): "Les journalistes découvrent une nouvelle violence chez les adolescentes qui se battent avec une intensité qu'on ne leur connaissait pas il ya seulement quelques années" (Le Devoir, 4 déc., 1997: A6). Aspects of the liberation thesis, which is rejected by many social scientists, are accepted and emphasized by print journalists who argue that girls are increasingly violent because they are consciously becoming

more liberated and are assuming the aggression of boys. This recent portrayal of girls' violence and gang involvement by these print journalists, and by the social scientists cited by them, conflicts with the image produced by other social scientists.

The fact that these two inter-related groups have changed their definitions of the nature of girls' violence and gang involvement over time and find this phenomenon to be problematic for different reasons, leads one to identify print journalists and social scientists as key claims-makers about this issue. The competing images projected by print journalists and social scientists in recent years will be examined and contrasted. It is the goal of this thesis to study how these two claims-making groups have recently constructed the phenomenon of girls' violence and gang involvement as a social problem in two different ways, and to address the implications this double construction may have on public policy and perception.

3. Plan of Thesis:

In Chapter One, I introduce the contextual social constructionist approach, and explain how it relates to the social construction of girls' violence and gang involvement. In Chapter Two, I begin a discussion of the historical progression of claims social scientists and other social problems experts have made about this issue over the years. In Chapter Three, I discuss the relationship between social problems experts and print journalists, and the particular interests for advancement that can govern the claims-making activity of each group. For example, I explore the way in which the print media has selected certain expert claims to support particular values and interests, and discuss the claims presented by print journalists over the years.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the methodology used in this thesis, as well as present some of its limitations. Chapter Five involves a discussion of the content analysis of selected social science and Canadian print media sources. Chapter Five presents the results of the latent content analysis of a selected sample of literature (briefly introduced in Chapters Two and Three) which

appeared in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Here, I introduce the rhetoric used by social scientists and Canadian print journalists when making claims about girls' violence and gang involvement by applying Best's (1990) model of the logical structure of claims-making. In this chapter, I identify several different images regarding the nature of this phenomenon which appear in social scientists' and print journalists' claims-making. In Chapter Five, I also discuss the frequency with which this issue has been addressed by social scientists and Canadian print journalists over three decades. In this section, I present data gathered from the manifest content analysis of the social science and Canadian print journalist articles on the issue of girls' violence and/or gang involvement which were published over the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. I also present data which assess the popularity of the rhetorical images present in the claims made by social scientists and Canadian print journalists in the literature analyzed. Chapter Six discusses some recent policy recommendations made by the two claims-making groups, which reflect each group's approach to this issue.

Chapter Seven includes a discussion of the results of the content and manifest analyses of the social science and Canadian print media literature, as well as the conclusion. In the conclusion, I comment on the state of the double construction of girls' violence and gang involvement as a social problem, discuss what this means for girls today, and make some suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER I: A CONTEXTUAL SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH TO GIRLS' VIOLENCE AND GANG INVOLVEMENT

1. Defining Social Constructionism:

Social constructionists investigate the construction of social problems by claims-making groups. Spector and Kitsuse (1977: 75) define social problems "as the activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative condition". Best (1995: 6) states that for constructionists, "social problems are not conditions; conditions are merely subjects of claims". Social constructionists view social problems as becoming problematic only when they are identified as such by claims-making groups. Therefore, social constructionist analysis examines the process by which certain conditions in society come to be known as social problems, cause concern to the public, and require a response.

> Social constructionist analysis focuses on three themes:
>
> the interests particular groups have in promoting a problem; the resources available to them; and the ownership they eventually secure over the issue or the degree to which their analysis is accepted as authoritative (Jenkins, 1994:5).

The interest groups who identify and promote a social problem are called claims-makers, and by making claims about the nature of an objective condition, these claims-makers "shape our sense of what the problem is" (Best, 1995: 8). Blumer's (1971) five stage natural history model of social problems illustrates the process of claims-making, and its importance in the development of social problems. The five stages of this model are: the emergence of a social problem, the legitimation of social problems, mobilization of action, formulation of an official plan of action and implementation of the official plan (Blumer cited in Spector & Kitsuse, 1977: 139). According to Blumer's model, claims-makers are instrumental in several stages, as their claims bring attention and legitimation to the social problem, as well as inspire public support and action.

There are several ways claims-makers shape, present and disseminate claims about an objective condition, and thus construct it as a social problem. Claims-makers typify social problems, in that they "characterize a problem's nature" (Best, 1995: 8). Typification occurs when the social problem is given an orientation, or it is argued that the problem is best understood from a certain perspective. In this sense, the social problem is designated as a moral, medical, legal, political or criminal justice problem, and is identified as having appropriate causes and a solution depending on the designated nature of the problem (Best, 1995: 9).

Another way claims-makers construct social problems is through the use of framings. Papke (1987) defines framings as:

> cultural combinations and constructions that put selected phenomena into comprehensible and consumable focus. Frames...are systems of selection, presentation and accentuation: they are patterned mechanisms of cognition interpretation that package social experience for production and purchasers of the frames (cited in Jenkins, 1994: 6).

Framing of the issue is usually done with the use of rhetorical techniques. Best (1990: 24) defines claims-making as essentially a rhetorical activity; claims-makers try to persuade others "that X is a problem, that Y offers a solution to that problem, or that Z should be adopted to bring that solution to bear". He argues that claims-makers persuade with the use of grounds, warrants and conclusion statements. Best states that grounds statements present the basic facts that are the foundation for the discussion of the problem. Warrant statements imply that action against the problem is justified by pointing to the violation of important social values and by presenting the damage the problem has done to certain groups and society at large. Conclusion statements encompass actual calls for action against the problem. Best maintains that these statements are carefully chosen; certain elements are emphasized and others omitted, in order to make the most convincing argument (Best, 1990: 44). Rhetorical devices and framings are usually presented

through the mass media (Jenkins, 1994: 5-6). Claims-makers frequently use the media to expose their claims to a large audience in order to receive publicity and support (Best, 1990: 18).

1.1 Contextual Social Constructionism and the Present Study:

The social constructionist perspective is divided into two approaches: strict and contextual. Strict constructionists, following the lead of John Kitsuse (Spector & Kitsuse, 1977, Ibarra & Kitsuse, 1993), argue that constructionist research should only focus on claims-making and should not judge claims. They argue that constructionists should not make assumptions about claims-makers' claims, as "a sociologist who makes statements about social conditions is simply another claimsmaker, one more participant in the claimsmaking process" (Best, 1995: 342). Therefore, strict constructionists wish to avoid making assumptions in their research about claims and objective reality. Conversely, contextual social constructionists, following the lead of Joel Best (1993, 1995), argue that "we are partially determined by the contexts (social structures, cultures, and languages) within which we live and work" (Hicks & Petrunik, 1997: 13). If an understanding of the claims is to be achieved, contextual constructionists feel it is necessary to locate claims-makers' claims within the context in which they arise. Moreover, contextual constructionists make assumptions about the validity of the claims-makers' claims. Contextual constructionists maintain that it is impossible not to make assumptions about the validity of some claims over others, and "because context has so many elements, the analyst invariably has to make assumptions about some of these elements" (Best, 1995: 346).

There exists an on-going debate among social constructionists regarding the merits of strict constructionism versus those of contextual constructionism. Woolgar and Pawluch's (1985) discussion of "ontological gerrymandering" pointed out 'flaws' in the work of Spector and Kitsuse and inspired a new direction in strict constructionism. Woolgar and Pawluch (1985: 216) argued that assumptions about social conditions were creeping into the work of constructionists, and named the technique of managing these assumptions 'ontological gerrymandering'. They

noted that this 'flaw' was appearing in social constructionist analyses that included the examination of the historical dimension of a social problem and its changing definitions. They used Spector and Kitsuse's (1977) examination of the definitional change of marijuana as a social problem from the 1930s to the 1960s as an example of 'ontological gerrymandering'. Spector and Kitsuse argued that a definitional change had occurred with respect to marijuana, as in the 1930s it was commonly claimed to be dangerous and addictive, while in the 1960s, a competing set of claims emerged that marijuana was harmless and non-addictive. According to Woolgar and Pawluch, Spector and Kitsuse damaged their analysis by stating that the objective nature of marijuana had not changed, but a change in the definition of marijuana had occurred. Spector and Kitsuse were thus guilty of 'ontological gerrymandering' because in stating that the nature of marijuana had not changed, they were implying that there was an objective reality to marijuana that could be known. This assumption went against the basic principle of social constructionism that social problems were not to be considered as objective conditions, but rather as subjective claims about alleged conditions. Therefore, Woolgar and Pawluch's argument about 'ontological gerrymandering' challenged certain constructionists' procedure of placing claims within historical context, and their desire to make assumptions about the validity of claims. However, Woolgar and Pawluch (1985: 224) did admit the inevitability of 'ontological gerrymandering':

> Perhaps all attempts at accounting (explaining) depend upon presenting at least some state of affairs as objective. Perhaps there must always be some reliable, dependable, and non-fluid determinant of the phenomenon to be explained.

In offering a solution to the problem of 'ontological gerrymandering', Ibarra and Kitsuse (1993) suggested that constructionists should simply stay away from case studies. They stated that:

> Our position is that the project of developing a theory of *social problems discourse* is a much more coherent way of proceeding with constructionism than, for example, the development of a series of discrete theories on the social construction of X, Y, and Z. To develop a theory about condition X when the ontological status of X is suspended results in "ontological gerrymandering"...which is to say flawed theory (Ibarra & Kitsuse, 1993: 33).

Ibarra and Kitsuse argued that social constructionist analysis should not examine how definitions of social problems fit into the socio-historical context in which they arise, but should examine how claims-makers use those definitions to make claims and gain support for their cause (Troyer, 1992: 26). They suggested that constructionist research should strictly examine the language of claims-making, and thus concluded that "social constructionism studies members' distinctive ways of perceiving, describing, evaluating, and acting upon symbolically demarcated social realities - what we have termed condition-categories" (Ibarra & Kitsuse, 1993: 33).

Joel Best (1993) questioned strict constructionists' policy of not evaluating the validity of claims because this would assume the existence of an objective reality to social conditions. Noting that strict constructionists argue that their theory is empirically based, Best questioned whether their theory could in fact be empirically based when strict constructionists make no references to empirical reality. Using the example of the AIDS epidemic to prove his point, Best argued that some groups claim that the AIDS epidemic is a conspiracy, and that strict constructionists would have to approach these claims as viable despite the reality that people are in fact dying of AIDS. Best noted that, as a result, this assumption-free strict constructionist analysis was not interesting, as these "researchers must ask the same questions about each claims-making campaign, rather than focus on the interesting aspects of a particular case (Best, 1993: 137). He argued that strict constructionism is 'too strict', as it puts a hold on the discussion of several interesting questions regarding the claims-making process. Furthermore, Best found Ibarra and Kitsuse's suggestion that a constructionist should only analyze the language of claims and "never leave language" to be unrealistic, as language is bound to its context in society. Best

maintained that "an analyst who ignores the social embeddedness of claims-makers' rhetoric takes that embeddedness for granted; this is another form of ontological gerrymandering" (Best, 1993: 141). In contrast with the limits of strict constructionism, Best argued that the contextual constructionist approach would be more advantageous, as contextual assumptions can be found in all constructionist work and:

> these works assume that we will understand the empirical world better if we pay attention to the manner in which social problems emerge and, at a more basic level, they also assume that understanding the empirical world is desirable (Best, 1993: 139).

Therefore, Ibarra and Kitsuse, and others' attempts at "value-free" strict constructionist analysis were found to contain assumptions about social conditions (Best, 1993), and thus strict constructionism was deemed to be an unattainable goal (Best, 1995: 343).

The present study examines, from a contextual social constructionist perspective, the competing claims-making activities of two inter-related groups - social problems experts and print journalists. The contextual constructionist perspective is used here because the changing historical context within which subjective claims have been made about girls' gang involvement and violence by the two groups, is extremely important to understanding their claims. Claims made about the nature of girls' gang involvement and violence by social problems experts and print journalists have historically been similar, but have diverged in their definitions in recent years. A discussion of this changing historical context will be reserved for the next two chapters where I argue that the social problem of girls' gang involvement and violence has been around for decades, and, contrary to recent representations, is not a new or increasing phenomenon (Chesney-Lind, Shelden & Joe, 1996). This discussion also introduces how social problems experts and print journalists have recently produced two separate constructions of the phenomenon of girls' gang involvement and violence.

2. The Relationship Between Social Problems Experts and Media Journalists as Claims-Making Groups:

Best (1989) states that in the claims-making process, there are two types of claims-makers, primary and secondary. Primary claims-makers can include victims, activists or experts, as these are the people with special knowledge and expertise about the social condition deemed problematic. Various primary claims-makers compete against each other in the social problems marketplace for official and public awareness and support. Primary claims-makers frequently use the media to gain publicity for their claims and support for their cause. The media aid the primary claims-makers to make their issue known to officials, as "media coverage helps policymakers set their agenda, and they are all the more likely to respond to claims if the public seems responsive to news stories about a problem" (Best, 1989: 260).

However, Best argues that the media do not simply restate primary claims-makers' claims about a social problem. He states that research on the news media has illustrated that "a variety of conventions and constraints shape the construction of news stories" (Best, 1989: 260). Therefore, the media do not just transmit claims, but have the power to transform and shape those claims to fit their interests and requirements. In light of this claims-making power, Best calls the media secondary claims-makers (Best, 1989: 260). He argues that while all claims are subject to rhetorical analysis, this is especially true of secondary claims-making, as "every story seeks to offer a convincing construction of reality" (Best, 1989: 260).

Primary claims-makers or social problems experts, who often lend their knowledge to the media, can be divided into three groups: social scientists (sociologists, criminologists, social psychologists); clinical and legal professionals (psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social workers, lawyers judges, police officials); and advocates (feminists, youth advocates, group home workers). In this analysis, social scientists are singled out from the groups of professional experts and are considered as those primary claims-makers who, through published research and other

activities, are at the forefront of claims-making about girls' violence and gang involvement. In this study, print journalists are singled out from the media fora and are referred to as secondary claims-makers, as they frequently quote social problems experts' views about girls' gang involvement and violence in their stories. Print journalists as secondary claims-makers are not treated as an instrument that primary claims-makers use to distribute their claims about girls' gang involvement and violence, but also as a group that has the ability to shape social scientists' claims and present their own. Therefore, print journalists are addressed as a claims-making competitor for social scientists, as well as other experts, in the social problems marketplace. This is the case because, with regards to the issue of girls' gang involvement and violence, the primary and secondary claims-makers have each made and continue to make a variety of different claims about the nature of this issue. The particular interests each claims-making group considers and serves when making-claims about girls' violence and gang involvement will be discussed, but these interests do not govern all social scientists and print journalists in their claims-making.

Some of the social scientists' and print journalists' claims are similar, and others are contradictory. The two claims-making groups remain in the preliminary stages of claims-making with respect to Blumer's (1971) model, as their claims-making has helped girls' gang involvement and violence emerge as a legitimate social problem, and the groups are now calling for action to alleviate the problem. The rhetoric used by each claims-making group is analyzed to determine the variety of claims being made, as well as isolate the rhetorical devices which represent this issue differently.

CHAPTER II: THE HISTORICAL PROGRESSION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS EXPERTS' CLAIMS ABOUT GIRLS' VIOLENCE AND GANG INVOLVEMENT

It has been frequently argued that female criminality has traditionally been ignored or misrepresented in early criminological theory (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992; Chesney-Lind & Bloom, 1997; Campbell, 1990; Shacklady Smith, 1978). Early theories of crime usually discussed the nature of crimes committed by males, and did not address the crimes of females in depth. When these early theories did address female criminality, female offenders tended to be depicted as "less criminally inclined than males", prone to sexual deviance, and mentally or physically abnormal (Gelsthorpe, 1989: 1). Over time, some theorists began addressing an 'increased' frequency with which girls and women were offending, and began examining new types of female crime. Theories on female gang involvement and violence within the gang began emerging, and thus experts on female delinquency began making different claims about the nature of female criminality than their earlier counterparts. This chapter will provide a historical overview of claims made in the published work of social problems experts (primarily sociologists, criminologists, and psychologists) about the nature of female criminality from the late 19th century to the present. This overview will chart the emergence and evolution of claims about this phenomenon as a social problem and highlight the myriad of claims that have been made about girls and crime.

1. Early Theories of Female Delinquency and Gang Involvement:

1800s: Among the earliest works on female criminality was Lombroso and Ferrero's The Female Offender (1895). In this work, Lombroso and Ferrero supported their biological theory of atavism to explain criminal behaviour, which was presented in their earlier work The Criminal Man (1876). They examined the skull, facial structure, tattooing, senses and field of vision of female offenders as well as other physical traits in order to arrive at the biological characteristics

which predispose females to criminal behaviour. Based on their observations, Lombroso and Ferrero identified 'born female criminals', who were fewer in number, but were more degenerate and ferocious than the male criminal. They argued that women in general have several characteristics in common with children, in that they are vengeful, jealous, cruel and have a deficient sense of morality (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1895: 151). They claimed that normally these deficiencies are neutralized by piety, a maternal instinct, a want of passion, sexual coldness, physical weakness, and undeveloped intelligence. Lombroso and Ferrero (1895: 151) argued that:

> ...when a morbid activity of the psychical centres intensifies the bad qualities of women, and induces them to seek relief in evil deeds; when piety and maternal sentiments are wanting, and in their place are strong passions and intensely erotic tendencies, much muscular strength and a superior intelligence for the conception and execution of evil, it is clear that the innocuous semi-criminal present in the normal woman must be transformed into a born criminal more terrible than any man.

They also identified 'occasional female criminals', which made up the majority of female offenders. Lombroso and Ferrero claimed that these female criminals were only led into crime on certain occasions, and that they were not as degenerate as born female criminals and did not possess the same masculine physical traits as they did. According to Lombroso and Ferrero, these occasional criminals are usually normal and attractive, and consisted mostly of prostitutes. They also described the characteristics of: 'hysterical offenders'; those women who committed crimes of passion and suicide; 'criminal female lunatics'; and 'epileptic delinquents' and their moral insanity. However, Lombroso and Ferrero's theory essentially argued that with respect to the differences between male and female offenders, "...women are very rarely criminal when compared with men, but when criminal they are infinitely worse" (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1895: 288).

1920s: The work of Frederic Thrasher made one of the first mentions of female gang involvement. In his book The Gang (1927), Thrasher primarily addressed male gang delinquency in Chicago. However, he did claim that girls involved in gangs did exist, but usually had an

auxiliary, and dependent status on male gang members. He claimed that, in gangs, girls either occupied the role of sexual object or tomboy. Thrasher (1927: 161) argued that gangs composed entirely of girls were "exceedingly rare", and stated that there were two reasons why girls did not form gangs:

> The social patterns for the behaviour of girls, powerfully backed by the great weight of tradition and custom, are contrary to the gang and its activities; and secondly, girls, even in urban disorganized areas, are much more closely supervised and guarded than boys and are usually well incorporated into the family group or some other social structure (Thrasher, 1927: 161).

In his work The Unadjusted Girl (1928), W.I. Thomas claimed that criminality or deviance was a pathology which was caused socially, not biologically. He argued that almost all female delinquency consisted of sexual misbehaviour. Thomas argued that these girls who engage in sexual delinquency were doing so not for procreation, but were using sex as a means to gain material objects such as clothes, and money. He claimed that civilized society had attributed a social sacredness to the young girl's virginity, thus identifying early sexual activity as wrong and delinquent. As a result, Thomas maintained that these girls must be saved from the social factors that promote this behaviour, being a bad family life and demoralization in society. He suggested the family court as a solution, where girls would be removed from the unsatisfactory (typically lower-class) environments that were influencing their sex delinquency, and would be placed in reformatories where they would be trained in morality and 'saved' (cited in Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992: 56-57).

Liberal reformers involved in the "child-saving movement" during the American Progressive Era in the 1920s shared in Thomas' conception of girls' delinquency as mostly sexual and highly immoral. These "child savers" were on a mission of morality and acted as humanitarians who were rescuing children "less fortunately placed in the social order" from immorality (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992: 106). This movement paid special attention to girls,

and established a new juvenile court in the United States which incarcerated them for such non-criminal status offences as "immorality", which implied that the girl had engaged in sexual intercourse, and charges of waywardness such as "running away" (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1992: 108). These girl-saving experts claimed that female delinquency was caused by a variety of social, psychological and biological factors, and they sought to remove girls from environments conducive to delinquency. Girls charged with status offences were thus removed from their homes and placed in training schools. These girls "were twice as likely as males to be detained for their [status] offenses, and spent five times as long in detention on average as their male counterparts" (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992: 108). This 'girl-saving' mentality did not only exist in the United States, but also existed in Canada. Girls were being sent to training schools, such as the Grandview School for Girls in Cambridge, Ontario, as children "in need of care and protection" (Faith, 1993: 246). Under the Juvenile Delinquents Act of Canada, young girls were sent to training institutions to serve indeterminate sentences for such status offences as "incorrigibility", "unmanageability", "potential for sexual immorality", "living in unsuitable homes", and "running away" (Faith, 1993: 248).

1950s: George Grosser (1952) isolated some differences between the delinquent behaviour of boys and girls. He noted that while boys steal for fun or for no practical end, girls steal in a more rational way, in that they steal things that they need or can use. To explain these varying motivations, he distinguished between role-expressive behaviour and role-supportive behaviour. Grosser concluded that boys' stealing was role-expressive behaviour, as stealing was committed to express masculinity, and thus was behaviour which fulfilled role demands. On the other hand, girls' stealing was deemed role-supportive behaviour because girls typically stole clothes and products which would enhance their femininity, and thus stealing was not committed to express mischief but was done in support of the feminine role (cited in Cohen & Short, 1966: 107).

The subcultural theories of Cohen (1955), and Cloward and Ohlin (1959) did not address

girls' gang involvement, but made a notable contribution to subcultural theory with a focus on boys' subcultural behaviour (cited in Leonard, 198: 130). Cohen (1955) claimed that "the delinquent subculture emerges...as a response to status problems experienced by working-class boys" (cited in Short & Strotdbeck, 1968: 4). Boys who are similarly disadvantaged join together in a subculture or gang to collectively violate conventional norms and criteria of status, and develop their own illegitimate means of achieving success. Cloward and Ohlin (1959) also identified boys as resorting to delinquency, as they have "a sense of being deprived of access to opportunities to which one is entitled", and thus seek opportunities for success by illegitimate means (cited in Short & Strodtbeck, 1968: 6).

1960s: Otto Pollak (1961) developed another biological theory of female criminality. In his work The Criminality of Women, Pollak identified that the majority of female crime consisted of sexual delinquency. He argued that both biological and psychological factors accounted for the low rates of female crime which were reflected in official statistics at that time. Pollak argued that the reason why there were such low arrest rates for females was that female offenders were more deceitful than men, and that this deceit let much of women's crime go undetected (cited in Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992: 58). He emphasized that females were inherently and biologically deceitful, due to their ability to conceal a lack of sexual arousal. Pollak argued that girls learned this deceit at a young age when their "natural aggressions are inhibited and forced into concealed channels" (Pollak cited in Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992: 59).

Gisela Konopka introduced a psychological theory of female delinquency in her book The Adolescent Girl in Conflict (1966). In her analysis, she argued that emotional problems leading to delinquency stemmed from broken homes and poor education. Similar to early theorists, Konopka maintained that girls' primarily engaged in sexual delinquency, and she "assumed that girls and women were largely controlled by their biology and their sexuality" (cited in Chesney-Lind, & Shelden, 1992: 61).

In 1968, Cowie, Cowie and Slater developed another biological theory in Delinquency in Girls, a work which accounted for girls' low rates of offending. They too claimed that female criminality was typically sexual in nature, as girls are charged with more sex delinquencies than boys due to the stricter standards of sexual behaviour to which girls are subject. However, Cowie, Cowie and Slater argued that a biological approach to understanding the lower rates of female offending compared to boys was more accurate than a consideration of the background factors to which boys and girls are differentially subject. They claimed that the female sex was basically more immune to delinquency than males. Cowie, Cowie and Slater maintained that this was the case because delinquency is related to the Y chromosome, which is possessed by males. They found evidence that masculinity is a prerequisite for delinquency, and thus their findings that delinquent girls are "oversized, lumpish, uncouth and graceless, with raised incidence of minor physical defects" (Cowie, Cowie & Slater, 1968: 166-7) indicated to them that delinquent girls possessed the masculine Y chromosome and are biologically abnormal.

In Short and Strodtbeck's work Group Process and Gang Delinquency (1968), they discussed the role of girls in the delinquent gang. They claimed that girls usually formed gangs that were auxiliary to boys' gangs, and were seen as sexual objects for the male members. Furthermore, they argued that girls in the gang were "considerably disadvantaged by social disabilities as well as objective opportunity", and were often physically unattractive in appearance and uncouth in their behaviour (Short & Strodtbeck, 1968: 242). Short and Strodtbeck also maintained that girls in the gang suffered from low self-esteem due to their social disabilities, and turned to delinquency to compensate for their problems (Short & Strodtbeck, 1968: 243).

Ruth Morris contributed to the development of the sociological gender role theory with two published papers in 1964 and 1965. In these papers, she explored sociological factors as precursors to female delinquency, such as differential socialization and differential opportunity structure. She argued that girls were more supervised than boys and thus were given less

opportunity to commit deviance. Furthermore, she claimed that through stricter moral standards existent in the socialization process for girls, girls felt a greater sense of shame than did boys about any deviance they had committed. Morris argued that these restrictive social factors placed on girls accounted for the low rate of female delinquency. Morris also claimed that elements which interfered with the achieving of culturally determined success goals most likely caused delinquency. She stated that because these success goals are different between males and females, their delinquency would also be different. Morris argued that obstacles to achieving power and status goals were likely to lead to delinquency in males, while obstacles to achieving positive relationships would contribute to girls' delinquency. Morris maintained that the existence of such obstacles to successful relationships for girls also accounted for the higher amounts of status offences and sexual delinquency among young girls (cited in Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992: 71).

1970s: In the 1970s, several conflicting sociological and criminological theoretical studies emerged which addressed the relationship between the Women's Movement and female criminality, and girls' entrance into more serious crime. Walter B. Miller (1973) studied a Boston girl gang called "The Molls". Based on his observations of The Molls, Miller found that this gang fit the stereotype of girl gangs discussed by earlier theorists, in that the Molls were dependent on a boys' gang. However, these girls did not present themselves as sexual objects for the boys in the gang, but wished to emulate and be accepted by them. They committed such masculine offences as theft, drinking, property damage, sex offences and assault in order of decreasing frequency. Despite the masculine nature of their offences, Miller claimed that the girls did not mind that their status depended on the acceptance of the boys, and thus concluded that the objectives of Women's Liberation and feminism had passed the Molls by (Miller, 1973: 35).

Contrary to Miller, Freda Adler argued in Sisters in Crime (1975) that the Women's Movement did have an effect on female criminality. She asked "Is it any wonder that once women were armed with male opportunities they should strive for status, criminal as well as civil,

through established male hierarchi[c]al channels?" (Adler, 1975: 11). Adler argued that this access to male opportunities also allowed young girls to increasingly enter into the world of more serious crime. She claimed that "girls are involved in more drinking, stealing, gang activity, and fighting - behavior in keeping with their adoption of male roles" (Adler, 1975: 25). Adler maintained that in the past the female role in the gang was as a sexual object, lookout or weapon/drug carrier, whereas due to women's liberation in the 1970s, girls were "moving closer to parallel but independent, violence-oriented, exclusively female groups" (Adler, 1975: 99).

Lee Bowker (1978) also argued that girls were increasingly becoming involved in all types of gangs: independent, auxiliary and mixed-gender groups. Gang related activities, for him, are thus both feminine and masculine in nature. However, he claimed that this increased female gang activity could not be due to the largely middle-class Women's Movement because the girls involved in gangs tended to be from lower-class backgrounds (Bowker, 1978: 148).

Peggy Giordano (1978) also argued against the use of the Women's Movement as an explanation for an 'increase' in female crime. She argued that the psychological or personal maladjustment explanations of the past and women's liberation explanations were all inadequate at explaining girls' delinquency. Instead, she claimed that:

> it is within the everyday social context of the friendship or gang networks that we can see perhaps the greatest evidence of change, and that these changing peer associations will have a more immediate impact on female crime patterns than that evidenced by any kind of ideological or attitudinal liberation (Giordano, 1978: 128).

Waln K. Brown's (1977) study of Black female gangs in Philadelphia found that girls still primarily occupied an auxiliary status in boys' gangs, with their role continuing to be that of sexual object and weapons/drug carrier. Brown (1977: 226) found only one girl's gang which was violence-oriented and completely independent of a boys' gang in Philadelphia. In the 1970s, the argument was also made that the quality of girls' offending was becoming more similar to that

of boys' in that the occurrence of serious delinquent acts by girls was increasing (Hindelang, 1971; Thompson & Lozes, 1976).

Lesley Shacklady Smith (1978) took a different approach to female gang involvement. She claimed that girls who were already delinquent and were stigmatized entered the gang for social and emotional support. Furthermore, Shacklady Smith argued that girls in gangs were not necessarily becoming more violent, but that a change in the definition of female delinquency had occurred. She claimed that agents of social control were now more apt to define females as increasingly violent as perceptions about women began to move away from the stereotypical female role (Shacklady Smith, 1978: 87).

2. Recent Theories of Female Delinquency and Gang Involvement:

1980s: Research which appeared in the 1980s was mostly concerned with determining the extent to which girls were involved in delinquency and gangs, the types of crimes girls were committing, and the factors which influenced their involvement. Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier (1980) examined American Uniform Crime Reports, national juvenile court statistics, self-report studies, and field studies of delinquent gangs from 1965 to 1976. Based on these reports, they stated that there was "no increase in female violent or gang-related delinquencies while self-report data show that, with the exception of marijuana use and drinking, female delinquency has remained generally stable over the past decade" (Steffensmeier & Steffensmeier, 1980: 62).

Suzanne Ageton (1983) made similar claims in her study of the distribution and dynamics of female delinquency from 1976 to 1980. In her study, Ageton examined American self-report delinquency data, in which age and cohort effects were categorized by race, social class and place of residence. From these data, she concluded that the incidence and prevalence of serious female delinquency (crimes against persons, theft) declined with age, and 15 to 17 year old girls in 1980

were considerably less involved in delinquency than their counterparts in 1976 (Ageton, 1983: 555).

In The New Female Criminal (1982), JoAnn Gennaro Gora made claims about the quality and quantity of female crime which were contradictory to Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier's claims. Gora studied whether the seriousness of a delinquent group's acts was affected by its sex composition. She compiled percentages of the seriousness of offences by sex composition of both male and female juvenile groups who had been arrested in New Jersey in the years 1959, 1969 and 1976. Contrary to Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier's findings (1980), Gora's results showed a gradual increase over time in the commission of serious offences by females, such as drug possession, prostitution, fraud and forgery, and assault (Gora, 1982: 73-5).

In the 1980s, several social scientists began examining the social and economic factors which influenced girl gang behaviour and delinquency. John Quicker (1983) examined the relationship of race and class on female gang involvement in a study of Chicano gangs in East Los Angeles. He argued that the girls in these gangs were still dependent on the male members, but were becoming more independent. He claimed that due to limited economic opportunities in the barrio, families were breaking down and were unable to provide guidance to young people. Quicker maintained that "almost all activities of young people occur within the context of gang life, where they learn how to get along in the world and are insulated from the harsh environment of the barrio" (cited in Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992: 46).

Bowker & Klein (1983) reanalyzed data which they collected on African-American girls in gangs in the 1960s, in a comparison of psychological and structural explanations for female gang involvement. From these data they concluded that gang and non-gang girls "all suffer from the consequences of racism, sexism, poverty, and extremely limited opportunity structures in the local community", and thus the decision to join a gang does not necessarily have to be influenced by a personal maladjustment, strained relations with the opposite sex, or problems with parents

(Bowker & Klein, 1983: 750). Bowker, Gross and Klein (1980) also claimed that female gang members were excluded from the planning and performance of delinquent gang activities, and their presence acted as an inhibitor to the execution of delinquent acts (Bowker, Gross & Klein, 1980: 509).

Conducting similar research as that of Quicker (1983), Anne Campbell (1984) studied three female gangs in New York City with the goal of determining why it is that girls join gangs, and what role they play in these gangs. She argued that most females in gangs were still auxiliaries to male gangs, and in the case of the gangs she studied, the girls were controlled by the boys. Furthermore, Campbell claimed that the gang provided ethnic minority girls with a way of coping with their bleak futures. She argued that due to the limited economic opportunity structures in their communities, the gang offered marginalized, lower-class girls opportunities for status, identity, material gain, and fun.

Mary Harris (1988) studied the Cholas, a Latino girl gang in the San Fernando Valley in California. She too maintained that these young girls resorted to gang behaviour to cope with the conditions in their dispossessed communities and broken families. She argued that the gang provides girls with identity, status, cohesion, esteem and a sense of belonging (Harris, 1988: 172). Harris also claimed that the girls in these gangs would "fight instead of flee, assault instead of articulate, and kill rather than control their aggression. 'Being bad', 'being crazy' and 'acting wild' earn respect and status" (Harris, 1988: 174).

Laura Fishman (1988) reanalyzed data collected on an African-American female gang in Chicago in the mid-1960s and noted problems with earlier research. She claimed that the girls in the gang the 'Vice Queens' were a typical female gang in the 1960s because they were an auxiliary to a male gang, and were their sexual objects, weapons carriers, and lookouts. Fishman argued that the Vice Queens were also an unconventional female gang for the time because they were more independent of the males, and engaged in masculine violence and aggression. Fishman

then commented on female gang involvement in the 1980s. She claimed that the girls who joined gangs in the 1980s were not much different than those girls in the 1960s, except that, due to the rapid depletion of the economic system in their communities, African-American female gangs in the 1980s were more involved in violence and masculine crime (Fishman, 1988: 91).

While not specifically commenting on the nature of girls' involvement in gangs and delinquency, Jack Katz (1988) developed an innovative theory of gang behaviour which looks as individual motivations and experience in the context of race, class, age and gender. He stated that gangs "are primarily an urban, minority-group, adolescent phenomena in North American and British cities because the ways of street elites have not found broader economic or political markets for their services" (Katz, 1988, 163). Katz argued that background social and psychological factors are not sufficient to explain why it is that youth participate in gangs and engage in delinquency. He claimed that both background and foreground factors are necessary to explain gang behaviour, and that what is crucial to understanding this phenomenon is "the existence, in generational background, of a culture humbled at the prospect of entering modern, rationalized society" (Katz, 1988: 163). Katz argued that the intimidation and 'badness' practiced in the gang is a way of expressing gender and racial or ethnic identities, and serves as a method of compensation for the humbled background from which gang members come.

1990s: Social science work on female delinquency and gang behaviour that was published in the 1990s usually comments on the nature of girls' involvement in delinquency or gangs, or addresses the frequency with which girls are engaged in gangs or violence.

Continuing her research on the factors which influence girls' gang participation and membership, Anne Campbell (1990) discussed the problems which confront poverty-class girls and cause them to seek solutions in the gang. She argued that it is important to "incorporate the community and class context in which these girls live and to identify what it means to be a woman growing up in and adapting to these conditions" (Campbell, 1990: 172). Campbell isolated five

factors which negatively affect lower-class, minority girls and predispose them for entry into the gang as a way of coping with bleak futures and dismal presents. She claimed these five factors, mostly applicable to Hispanic females, were: 1) the future of domestic labour and little opportunity for education; 2) subordination to male partners; 3) sole responsibility for children; 4) social isolation of the housewife; 5) powerlessness of underclass membership (Campbell, 1990: 173). Campbell also noted that physical and sexual abuse by family members is a common occurrence in the lives of gang girls and is related to their involvement in the gang.

Addressing the nature of girls' role in delinquent gangs, William J. Swart (1991) developed a theory of "acceptably deviant behaviour" to explain female gang behaviour. He argued that girls in gangs have to "fine tune their deviant behavior in order to make it 'acceptable' to their unique position as females within the delinquent gang" (Swart, 1991: 78). He claimed that girls in the gang must maintain an amount of femininity in order to be accepted by male members, by being sexually appealing and available, but also must engage in more masculine activities such as drug use and violent/aggressive behaviour to gain acceptance. Swart concluded that the "result is that female gang members must operate within competing and often contradictory normative contexts, in order to find a level of behavior which is 'acceptably deviant' to the other gang members" (Swart, 1991: 79).

Canadian psychologist Fred Mathews (1993) claimed that girls in gangs in Canada can be just as violent, and sometimes more violent than the boys. He argued that girls in gangs are often the instigators of both inter- and intra-gang fights, and the girls frequently act as weapon and drug carriers. Mathews also noted that girls in gangs use "the gang/group to meet the same power and esteem needs as the boys", and that the gang acts as a surrogate family for both boys and girls (Mathews, 1993: 21). Bjerregaard and Smith (1993) also argued that female gang members' reasons for involvement and the offending that occurs in gang settings are similar to those of male

members, except that lack of school success is a more salient factor affecting young girls (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993: 93).

In developing his theory of gendered crime as structured action, James Messerschmidt (1995, 1997) used the role of girls in gangs to illustrate that gender patterns of crime vary and are not static. He argued that girl gang members both emphasize their femaleness, as they are constructed as sexual objects, but in banding together to 'protect the hood', girls also engage in more typically masculine crimes of violence. Therefore, Messerschmidt argued that:

> the case of gang girls exhibits a unique fluidity of gender in which different gender identities are emphasized or avoided depending upon the social setting. Indeed, within the social context of the gang, 'bad girls' construct femininity that secures approval as members of the gang and as women (Messerschmidt, 1995: 184).

Karen Joe and Meda Chesney-Lind (1996) explored the reasons why girls join gangs in the context of ethnic relations and cultural patterns in Hawaii. They argued that the lives of girls in the gang "are more complex than simple rebellion against traditional notions of femininity and are heavily shaped by an array of economic, educational, familial, and social conditions and constraints" (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996: 162). Joe and Chesney-Lind stated that several of the girls in their study had been physically and sexually abused, and came from dysfunctional families. They argued that the gang serves as a surrogate family and a means of coping with violence in the home and the neighbourhood, boredom, a lack of resources and few opportunities in the community. Joe and Chesney-Lind claimed that girl gang members do not necessarily seek out violence, but that due to the dispossessed and violent communities in which they live, violence is an everyday reality in their lives (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996: 174). Furthermore, they concluded that:

> the violation of traditional notions of femininity, then, particularly the 'unacceptable' displays of toughness and independence, are hardly a reflection of liberation from patriarchal controls. The costs of having been born female are not only clear in these girls' lives, but are, in fact, increased by the economic dislocation of their communities (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996: 175).

Chesney-Lind, Shelden and Joe (1996) addressed media reports that girls are becoming more masculine in their offending and are increasingly involved in violent crime. They examined official statistics, media portrayals, and quantitative research on female gangs. They argued that self report data do not support the increased rise of gangs of either gender, and that girls are traditionally involved in status and property offences, rather than violent offences. They claimed that fighting and violence is a part of the girls' lives in the gang, and that their involvement in gangs is not a sign of liberation but a method of coping with a bleak present and future. Chesney-Lind, Shelden and Joe concluded that girls have long been involved in violence in the gang, but this violence was ignored by law enforcement agencies as they were only concerned with girls' sexual deviance. They claimed that girls and their levels of violence have thus been misrepresented by the media, and are mistakenly considered as more vicious than their male counterparts when they engage in mostly minor acts of violence (Chesney-Lind, Shelden & Joe, 1996: 203-4). Kim Pate (1997) also argues that the media are misrepresenting young female offenders. She claims that Canadian journalists exaggerate and sensationalize singular incidents of female violence, and thus represent a wide spread increase of these offences. Pate stated that "the stereotype of girls becoming gun-toting gang robbers is simply not supported by statistics", and that most of the few girls who are arrested in Ontario have been charged with offences that have been redefined as serious under 'zero tolerance' policies (Pate, 1997: 31).

Canadian psychology professor Sybille Artz (1998) has recently explored the factors which influence girls' involvement in violence. She conducted in-depth interviews with six girls who have been victims and perpetrators of violence, in order to inquire into and understand "the life-worlds and practices of school girls who are involved in violence" (Artz, 1998: vii). Based on these interviews, Artz noted five emerging patterns that are characteristic of the respondents' lives, and that prepare them for involvement in violence: 1) they all come from dysfunctional families; 2) all have conceptions that gave women low general worth and saw their worth

measured in levels of acceptance by males; 3) due to violence in the home, all have learned that violence was an acceptable method of conflict resolution; 4) all believe that there is a hierarchical system that must be respected by peers or else violent punishment is warranted; 5) all have experienced physical or sexual abuse, and suffer from low self-esteem (Artz, 1998: 196).

Several social scientists in the 1990s have begun examining official statistics to determine whether the argument that girls are becoming more violent is founded or not. In the United States, Meda Chesney-Lind (1997) examined FBI statistics and self-report data to determine whether girls' crime is becoming more serious and similar to boys' crime. She claimed that the offences for which girls are primarily arrested are status offences (running away), and larceny theft (shoplifting), as 23% of girls arrests in 1994 were for status offences, 25.6% were for larceny theft, and only 12% were for serious violent offences (Chesney-Lind, 1997: 12-3). Chesney-Lind then compared these female statistics with those of males and found that only 8.6% of boys' arrests in 1994 were for status offences, 17.2% were for larceny theft, and 14.3% were for serious violent offences (Chesney-Lind, 1997: 12-3). She also claimed that girls lives are more characterized by sexual and physical abuse than are the lives of boys (Chesney-Lind, 1997: 25). Chesney-Lind concluded that "girls live, play and go to school in the same neighborhoods as boys, but their lives are dramatically shaped by gender", and thus girls' crimes and the motivations for them continue to be different from the criminal activity of boys (Chesney-Lind, 1997: 31).

In Canada, Marge Reitsma-Street (1993) analyzed Canadian youth court statistics for females before and after the implementation of the Young Offenders Act (YOA) in 1984. She noted that, as status offences were decriminalized in Canada by the 1990s, there has been a reduction in the amount of status offence charges against girls from 1974 to 1991. However, she argued that there has been an increase in total charges against girls over the years. Reitsma-Street maintained that the increase in total charges can be attributed to increases in minor assault

charges, which consist of shoving, pushing, punching, throwing things, and hair pulling (Reitsma-Street, 1993: 444). She argued that the increase can also be attributed to an increase in charges against the administration of justice, which include charges for failure to appear in court, breach of probation, and leaving a residence without the permission of an adult (Reitsma-Street, 1993: 445). Reitsma-Street claimed that the offences for which girls have been charged continue to be the same as they were before the implementation of the YOA, such as minor property, mischief, minor personal assault and administrative offences, and therefore she concludes that neither boys nor girls are better off under the YOA (Reitsma-Street, 1993: 453).

Doob and Sprott (forthcoming) also examined Canadian youth court statistics to disprove the media claims that girls are becoming more violent. They argued that Ontario's policy of 'zero tolerance' in schools has increased the number of violence cases going to court, and thus has increased the number of minor cases of violence. Doob and Sprott argued that from 1991-1996, there was a 39% increase in the number of minor assault cases for girls, a 23.7% increase in assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm, and a 20.5% decrease in the number of serious aggravated assault cases for girls (Doob & Sprott, forthcoming: 11). They claimed that because a minor injury can be equated with assault with bodily harm and the fact that a weapon can be anything, assault categories are very broad and easy to fall into. Thus, Doob and Sprott argued that "one would, we believe, have more confidence that this increase reflected a change in girls' behaviour if it were to have shown up in the 'most serious' category of assaults" (Doob & Sprott, forthcoming: 5).

Theories of female delinquency and gang involvement have been around for decades, and have evolved considerably over the years. Early theories examined how girls' personal maladjustment, sexual deviance, and gender roles influenced their involvement in delinquent gang behaviour and their tendency to offend less frequently or in different ways than males. More recent theories address the social, political and economic factors which are related to girls'

delinquency and gang involvement. They have also shifted the focus of research to determining whether girls are offending more frequently and more seriously, and if so, why?

Over time social problems experts have typified the issue of girls' delinquency and gang involvement in different ways. The early theorists characterized the problem as a moral issue that could be solved with incarceration in training schools, as in these schools girls would get sufficient moral guidance that would protect them from the dangers of rampant sexuality (which to them accounted for the majority of female delinquency), and would teach them to be lady-like and to get along with parents and peers. Recently, the majority of social problems experts have identified female delinquency as a social and economic problem; they claim that it is dispossessed communities, a lack of opportunities, racism, sexism, and broken homes that predispose girls for entry into the delinquent gang. However, not all theorists agree on these typifications. All of these social scientists have drawn generalizations about the nature of female delinquency and gang involvement and have treated their studies as representative of all female delinquents and gang members. Over time, the fact that girls have participated in violence, gangs and delinquency has not been disputed in these theories (Campbell, 1990: 166), but the role girls play, the type and frequency of their delinquent activity, and the reasons for girls' participation have been at issue.

CHAPTER III: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MEDIA, JOURNALISTS AND EXPERT CLAIMS OVER TIME

1. The Relationship Between Social Problems Experts, the Media and Journalists:

It is necessary to note that the relationship between experts, the media and journalists can be constrained by the interests of each group. Best argues that:

> Primary claims-making occurs when individuals try to call attention to social problems; secondary claims-making involves spreading these claims through the news media or popular culture. Secondary claims-making does not merely transmit claims; it translates and transforms them to fit the media's requirements (Best, 1989: 259).

Thus, news media coverage is often used by primary claims-makers to convey their claims to the public. As primary claims-makers, experts use the media to make their claims known and to gain support for them (Best, 1989: 260). However, the media and journalists as secondary claims-makers have the power to select which claims are presented and to decide the extent to which a claim is addressed. Several researchers have argued that when reporting on crime, the news media first select the types of crime news that are fit to print based on a criteria of professional interests (Sherizen, 1978; Best, 1989; Roshier, 1973); second, the news media refer to experts (criminologists, sociologists, police, clinicians, social workers, lawyers) to make their stories more credible and newsworthy (Best, 1989; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991); and third, the media may transform the information they receive from experts to fit the length and theme of their stories (Barak, 1994; Greek, 1994; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991).

Sherizen (1978: 204) notes that "the mass media follow some rules which inform a selection of crime events", and that this selection process transforms the crime news presented in newspapers into a constructed reality. He argues that newspapers are the "most detailed purveyors of crime news of any of the media", and they find crime news to be particularly useful and convenient (Sherizen, 1978: 208). Newspapers find crime news useful and convenient because crimes are constantly occurring, are easily discoverable through communications with

police, and are always culturally relevant and news-worthy. Sherizen states that crime reporters follow a process of newsgathering that limits their presentations of the news. He argues that "the limitations stem from job-related requirements such as citing a creditable source of information so that the story is 'objective' and writing the story with the least amount of work" (Sherizen, 1978: 210). He maintains that crime reporters often turn to police as a source of credible information, and that because police provide the materials that the reporters require, "what passes for crime news is an ideological construct; that which is constructed out of the power of official versions of crime" (Sherizen, 1978: 213).

Roshier (1973) addresses some of the criteria which determine the newsworthiness of a crime story, and which cause one crime story to be chosen for print over another story. He (1973: 35) states that a crime story is newsworthy depending on the seriousness of the criminal offence; whether it contains 'whimsical' or unusual circumstances; if it contains sentimental or dramatic circumstances; or if a famous or high status person is involved in the crime in any way (as perpetrator or victim). Furthermore, he also finds that any story that is sensationalistic, in that it contains entertainment value and appeals to nobler or baser human emotions, is also considered to be very newsworthy (Roshier, 1973: 35).

Best (1989) examined how the American network news presented stories about threats to children during the years 1972 to 1986, and explored the conventions and constraints which shaped the construction of these stories. He argues that, in the process of trying to inform and entertain, television news organizations follow a particular form in which the news story becomes credible, personalized and convincing. Best states that in the case of broadcasts addressing threats to children, networks would frequently consult government officials, experts (physicians, psychologists, lawyers, and activists), and ordinary people get access to their opinions or experiences with the problem. He argues that "in this way, a problem which has been intellectualized by experts and personalized by victims becomes the viewer's own" (Best, 1989:

265). Furthermore, network news broadcasts often selected and combined several types of film on threats to children in order to make the story seem more credible and convincing. Best argues that network news broadcasts also typified the problem of threats to children with the use of powerful examples, serving a rhetorical purpose. He states that these broadcasts usually opened with particular individuals discussing especially serious and horrifying cases of child abuse or abduction with the purpose of "forcing an emotional response from viewers" (Best, 1989: 268). Best maintains that these examples also serve the rhetorical purpose of typifying the problem as a serious threat to society. These typifications are often then backed up with the use of statistics which convey that not only is the problem of a horrifying nature, but that it is also a widespread problem that requires immediate attention.

Moreover, Best states that these network news broadcasts typically devoted their time to describing threats to children, and presented a simplistic explanation for such threats by blaming the individual offender. They thus ignored explanations and solutions that considered wider social forces, and instead discussed medical treatment as a solution to this pathological problem caused by flawed individuals. Best maintains that news stories:

> aim to persuade the viewer, to demonstrate both that a story is newsworthy and meets the standards of objective, factual broadcast journalism, and that the problem under examination warrants public concern and can be resolved without fundamental change in American society (Best, 1989: 277).

He argues that network news workers face several constraints: stories need to be told in a limited amount of time; they need to be visually interesting and entertaining enough to be chosen over competing stories; and must they be told in a way which protects the network from critique and legal repercussions (Best, 1989: 277).

Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) discusses the role experts and professional guidelines play in media reporting about youth gangs. He argues that gangs have traditionally received a lot of attention from the American media because stories about gangs provoke interest and produce

profit. He states that "rarely does a story about gangs become newsworthy unless it has something sensational to it" (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991: 286). Sanchez-Jankowski maintains that stories about gangs are newsworthy and are appealing to news corporations because they contain interest generating topics such as violence and/or crime.

He isolates six professional guidelines which constrain media reporting on gangs. Journalists must consider whether the particular story will have national interest and relevance. Sanchez-Jankowski states that violence present in a story often is a determinant of national interest for reporters, and thus is often emphasized and exploited by the media. The second professional guideline which must be considered is whether the news story is novel. Thirdly, reporters must consider whether the story will affect and generate emotional reactions. The fourth professional consideration is the pace of the show or article, in that enough information must be included, but not too much on any one aspect. Furthermore, the story must be presented clearly to the general public, and this is done by keeping the comments of informants and experts "restricted to their barest elements" (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991: 293). The sixth professional guideline involves balance in the report, which involves quick commentary on multiple, complicated aspects of gang life, providing little understanding on any one aspect of the phenomenon.

Moreover, Sanchez-Jankowski discusses four technical difficulties with reporting that influence the content of news stories about gangs. Deadlines tend to dictate the amount of information included, as the amount of time a reporter has to gather relevant information is restricted. Another difficulty concerns the reporter's training. Sanchez-Jankowski argues that often reporters doing stories on gangs attempt to present a sociological analysis of the problem which they are not qualified to do. They sometimes quickly consult experts who are not familiar with the aspects of gang life the reporter wishes to discuss, and thus present an inaccurate view of gangs. Furthermore, time/space constraints affect the depth and quality of the story, as the reporter makes the decisions regarding what is included and how much time is devoted to any one

topic. Sanchez-Jankowski (1991: 295) notes that time/space constraints often affect the way experts' comments are presented, as reporters in a hurry frequently "ask experts about gangs and then force them to answer the question quickly". He also argues that frequently reporters allow experts to engage in a long explanation of a phenomenon, but later edit their comments to fit the theme of the story (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991: 296). He maintains that:

> professional and business interests work to produce similar stories about gangs because they influence reporters, editors, and producers to focus on issues in which the general public has traditionally shown an interest - namely crime, sex and violence (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991: 297)

Barak (1994) argues that the presentation of crime news is highly selective, and that this process of selection is influenced by predominant interests in society, as well as corporate interests. Barak maintains that "both mass communications and the media are subordinate to the hegemonic values of the political economy" (Barak, 1994: 244). Barak argues that in the process of the selection of crime news, the media ignore some harmful behaviour and remove incidents of crime from their historical and structural contexts. Barak calls for a 'newsmaking criminology' in which criminologists will appreciate the fact that media portrayals of serious crime and control are ideological constructs, and will attempt to relocate crime and control in their political, structural and historical contexts through close relationships with the media (Barak, 1994: 253).

In response to Barak's call for a 'newsmaking criminology', Greek (1994) addresses whether a more realistic image of crime and justice can be achieved by criminologists through involved relationships with the media. Based on his personal experiences as an expert quoted by the media, Greek argues that it is very difficult to clearly express social science research through the media, as the expert has little control over what they present. He states that there are many hazards in speaking to the media, as there is the possibility of being quoted out of context, or having your comments directed or transformed to suit the theme of the story. He suggests that "in the worst case scenario, the reporter knows what story he or she wants to write in advance and

uses social scientists and their research simply to support a preconceived idea" (Greek, 1994: 268). He concludes that it is difficult to effectively and accurately convey social science research through the media primarily due to time and space constraints. Greek argues that the end product consists of short quotes and sound bites selected to entertain readers/viewers, and are not necessarily selected to preserve the complexities and integrity of the research (Greek, 1994: 280).

In order for social science information to be better represented by the media, Greek makes several suggestions as to how social scientists can effectively manage relations with various media formats. He suggests that social scientists should be wary about certain formats such as telephone and taped television interviews because the dangers of being misquoted are highest with these media formats. He argues that radio interviews are easier to manage because one does not need to be concerned about visual staging and appearance. Greek contends that live television interviews, despite visual staging, are more effective at conveying one's message due to the immediacy of the presentation. For all formats, Greek suggests that preparation for interviews is key to conveying one's message effectively, and that long explanations of phenomena should be avoided because they can be easily edited to fit a reporter's point and not the expert's (Greek, 1994: 279).

In examining all of the literature that discusses the media and journalists' selection and presentation of crime news, it appears that there is a consensus that in order to comply with the business and professional interest of selling information, journalists distort the nature and extent of the crime problem (Sherizen, 1978; Roshier, 1973; Best, 1989; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Barak, 1994; Greek, 1994). Several researchers also agreed that journalists are capable of misquoting experts to make their distorted message more credible and appealing to the public (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Barak, 1994; Greek, 1994). While this is not always the case, it appears that "the press does use the considerable power at its disposal to keep alive, direct and to some extent exaggerate the problem as it is purveyed to the public" (Roshier, 1973: 36).

However, the news media and its journalists are not the only claims-making group which has vested interests that can affect the nature of its claims. Addressing the relationship between the construction of social problems by experts and their professional interests, Scott (1970: 268) argues that with respect to the construction of conceptions of stigma, experts present different meanings of stigmatizing conditions. They do so because they are influenced and bound by "cultural values, the experts' professional training, and the institutional settings in which they are practiced". The underlying result of these influences is that the conceptions of stigma are shaped by experts to protect their professional interests and appeal to the interests of the lay public who must accept these conceptions. Berger and Kellner (1981) also argue that social scientists, such as sociologists, can assume the vested interests of their technocratic employers, which affects the nature of their research. They argue that once employed by a technocratic institution, sociologists increasingly think like their technocratic employers, and "sociology in this position of technocratic subservience becomes a very parochial activity, situation-bound and pragmatic" (Berger & Kellner, 1981: 125). Thus, when the sociologist enters into such an agreement with a technocratic agency, some of the original integrity of his or her work may be sacrificed in order to comply with the agency's interests. Berger and Kellner argue that:

> there is the mystique of the 'expert', who stakes out a monopolistic territory in the social distribution of knowledge. As a result of this, there is the development of vested interests by bodies of experts - defending, expanding and selling their monopolistic...claims (Berger & Kellner, 1981: 128).

In the worst case scenario, Berger and Kellner state that the sociologist may deliberately or unconsciously adapt his or her findings to suit the interests of the technocratic employer. However, they caution that despite the problems of relationships between technocracy and the social sciences, this does not mean that sociology should not be used for wider social or technocratic purposes. Berger and Kellner argue that these relationships can be problematic, and that social scientists should be aware of this and should resist "being sucked into the technocratic

mentality" (Berger & Kellner, 1981: 128). This recommendation can be applied to relationships between the media, journalists and social scientists. Greek's (1994) advice rings true, in that social scientists need to be aware of the capabilities of journalists to distort their messages, to take more responsibility for what happens to the information they give to the news media, and to manage their communications with them more effectively in order to avoid distortion. A 'newsmaking criminology' is called for, where criminologists and other experts, make "conscious efforts...in interpreting, influencing, or shaping the presentation of 'newsworthy' items about crime and justice" and join the mass-mediated production of crime (Barak, 1994: 238).

Summary:

Journalists often consult experts to make their stories more newsworthy, credible and interesting. Social scientists and other experts on social problems have had, and continue to have a difficult relationship with journalists. This relationship is difficult because, without a 'newsmaking criminology', the amount of information experts have been able to present through the media has been highly constrained by time and space limitations. The relationship has also been affected by the professional and business interests of media corporations in that they want to print the most newsworthy stories to boost public interest and profits. The relationship is further constrained by the limited amount of control experts have in the presentation of their views and research. These limitations are not always in place, for example some newspaper organizations are interested in presenting a deeper understanding of phenomenon in their brief stories, as opposed to other news corporations who are focused on using sensationalism to sell papers. However, the presence of any of these limitations has often resulted in a degree of distortion in media publications of the nature and extent of crime, as well as the presentation of selected and truncated expert views of crime. I argue later that these limitations have resulted in the presentation of a distorted view of the issues of girls' gang involvement and violence by Canadian print journalists. I now present a historical overview of the claims about girls' gang involvement

and violence made by American and Canadian print journalists in order to illustrate the variety of claims made over time, print journalists' use of expert knowledge, and the similarities and differences between the claims made by print journalists and social scientists with respect to this issue.

2. Early Print Media Claims About Girls' Gang Involvement/Violence and Their References to Expert Knowledge:

Contrary to social science research, there are not very many early print journalist sources available which include claims made about the nature of girl gang involvement and violence. One of the first reports on girls in gangs produced by a print journalist was reporter Robert Rice's (1963) study of the New York female gang the Persian Queens. His portrayal of the girls in this gang was similar to the early claims made by social scientists about the role of the girl in the delinquent gang. While he was following the work of a social worker who was helping the girls in the gang, Rice did not consult her for information about the nature of the girl gang. Based on his observations, Rice claimed that the members of the Persian Queens were sexually promiscuous; formed an auxiliary to a male gang; and were 'dim', uncouth and physically unattractive (Rice, 1963: 153-4). Rice also stated that the Persian Queens engaged in physical fights with each other and rival girl gangs, and that these fights usually involved pushing, hitting and scratching with fingernails. The emphasis Rice placed on the girls' physical appearance was consistent with the practices of the social worker, who ran a Charm Clinic with the philosophy that "if she could teach girls to look like ladies there was a chance that they would start to act like ladies and think of themselves as ladies..." (Rice, 1963:154). In addition to the fact that he found the girls in the gang to be 'physically unattractive', 'dim', and 'sexually promiscuous', Rice argued that the 'poor and lethargic' community in which they lived in New York added to the girls' 'hopelessness' in improving their behaviour (Rice, 1963: 187).

Another early news story which addressed girls' violence and crime rates appeared in the New York Times in 1971. This newspaper article featured FBI statistics from 1960 to 1969 which showed that the female crime rate had sharply risen over that of males. The journalist quoted several experts (including judges, sociologists, criminologists and law enforcement officials) who attributed the 'rise' in female crime rates to the increased opportunities women had gained in society due to the Women's Movement (New York Times, June 13, 1971: 1&72).

In Canada, two news stories appeared in 1979 which made contradictory claims about the nature and volume of female delinquency. On May 16, 1979, a story appeared in the Winnipeg Free Press which claimed that young girls typically did not engage in serious offences but were usually accused of minor offences such as running away, truancy, and shoplifting. The journalist quoted experts such as probation officers and police officials who claimed that girls were usually involved in self-destructive crimes such as drinking, drug abuse and prostitution due to low self esteem. These experts also argued that girls were rarely the instigators of violence (Winnipeg Free Press, May 16, 1979: 51). Seven months later on November 15, 1979, the Montreal Gazette published an article which claimed that young girls were engaging in more violent crime at an earlier age. Police officers, social workers and probation officers were consulted, and stated that women's liberation was to blame for the 'increase' in girls' violence, as girls were out to prove their equality in every act, including delinquency (Montreal Gazette, November 15, 1979: 41).

The majority of these American and Canadian print journalists' early claims about girls' gang involvement and violence were similar to those made by early social scientists. Reporters and the experts they consulted characterized girls in gangs as auxiliary members who were sexually promiscuous, and suffered from low self-esteem due to physical and behavioural unattractiveness. They portrayed girls as commonly engaging in minor offences such as shoplifting, truancy and running away. However, some of the news stories claimed that girls were increasingly becoming involved in serious crime and violence. Similar to the early claims of

criminologist Freda Adler, the claimants attributed this increased involvement in serious crime to the Women's Movement and the broadening of opportunities for women in society. While print journalists presented some claims in the 1960s and 1970s that were similar to those in early social science theories, the claims made by print journalists departed from those of social scientists in the 1980s and 1990s. These print media claims will be discussed in the next section.

3. Recent Print Media Claims About Girls' Gang Involvement/Violence and Their References to Expert Knowledge:

In the 1980s, claims made by print journalists about girls' gang involvement and violence began to depart from social scientists' claims in that they focused more on girls' 'increasing' levels of violence. In 1984, the Winnipeg Free Press published an article which once again claimed that there was an 'increased' number of young girls involved in violent crime. The article referred to statistics which showed that the number of girls involved in serious offences, such as armed robbery and break and enter, had almost doubled every year in the past three years. The journalist quoted one expert who claimed that there was more violence among young girls and that more of these girls were moving onto more serious crimes as adults (Winnipeg Free Press, Jan. 6, 1984: 3).

The New York Times published an article on females in gangs in 1986. In this article, the journalist quoted law enforcement officials and sociologists who argued that women and girls involved in gangs were just as criminal as males in gangs, but mostly join gangs to find a mate. Sociologists claimed that girls in gangs enjoy status as fighters in the gang, but this fighting is not as violent as that of boys and weapons include fingernails, teeth and knives. Furthermore, experts quoted in the article stated that girl gang members still acted as lookouts and weapons carriers for male members (New York Times, Jan. 2, 1986: C8).

In the 1990s, claims about girls' increasing violence and gang involvement began appearing more frequently in the print media. In 1990, The Wall Street Journal released a story called "You've come a long way, Moll" in which the journalist argued, based on FBI Uniform Crime Reports, that "between 1979 and 1988, the number of women arrested for violent crimes went up 41.5%, vs. 23.1% for men. The trend is even starker for teen-agers" (Wall Street Journal, Jan. 25, 1990: A14). The story, with the help of quotes from criminologists, claimed that females were becoming more involved in such violent arenas as terrorism and gangs. The main theme of the article was that female violence was a negative consequence of societal encouragement for women and girls to assert their equality and independence.

Another newspaper article which claimed that girls were becoming involved in more violent offences appeared in the New York Times in 1991. The journalist reported that experts were claiming that the 'increase' in female violence was due to "less supervision, the breakup of families and an increase in gang behaviour". The journalist stated that girls join gangs to imitate the behaviour of boys and to achieve the same freedoms that they enjoy, as well as to protect themselves from the violence in their neighbourhoods. Other experts that were quoted argued that the 'increase' in serious offences and violence was because of poverty, as poor girls want nice things and will resort to illegitimate means to acquire them (New York Times, Nov. 25, 1991: A1).

In 1993, Newsweek printed an article on gangs which discussed the 'increased' number of girls involved in gangs and gang violence. The journalist quoted statistics which showed that in Massachusetts the rate of violent offences by girls from 1987 to 1991 had doubled. Furthermore, the article claimed that "girls are breaking into the traditionally male world of gangs..." (Newsweek, Aug.2, 1993: 44). These girls allegedly joined gangs for protection, fun, acceptance and because boyfriends may be members. The experts that were quoted argued that girls in gangs can be just as ruthless as boys and often brutally beat other girls. One social worker claimed that

many of the girls who engage in violence and are gang members have been abused and are applying learned violent behaviour (Newsweek, Aug.2, 1993: 44) .

Similar claims have been presented recently in Canadian newspapers. In 1995, a Globe & Mail article discussed the 'rising' number of girl gang members in Canada. The experts that were consulted by the journalist claimed that girl gang membership was growing and that girls in gangs were engaging in more brutal and ruthless violence. One psychologist claimed that female gang members were more vicious and aggressive than male members. Other experts claimed that girls were no longer content to be auxiliary, submissive members of boys gangs, and as a result were forming their own gangs to assert their independence and power (Globe & Mail, Sept.12, 1995: A10).

Another newspaper article which reported an 'increase' in violence among young girls in Canada appeared in the Calgary Herald in 1995. In this article, the journalist quoted a lawyer as saying that "there seems to be a shift in values that somehow is resulting in more violent female crime" (Calgary Herald, Sept.14, 1995: B8). This expert claimed that the reason why girls were engaging in more violent behaviour was because they want to demonstrate how tough they can be. Another lawyer stated that although there was no increase in violence, just an increase in reporting of girls' violent behaviour, the female gang was a new element in youth violence. This expert claimed that female gang members attack other girls due to disputes over boys, drug debts, to gain material possessions, and to psychologically degrade or humiliate rivals (Calgary Herald, Sept.14, 1995: B8).

More recently, Canadian journalist Patricia Pearson's book, When She Was Bad (1997), argues that females can be just as violent as males. Pearson claims that Western society has traditionally defined females as the gentler sex and has ignored their violent behaviour. Pearson argues that we predominantly associate aggression and violence with males and do not concede that women are capable of engaging in such destructive behaviour. She maintains that females

traditionally have been viewed as engaging in self-destructive behaviour such as suicide, self-mutilation, and eating disorders. Pearson states that:

> The sole explanation offered by criminologists for violence committed by a woman is that it is involuntary, the rare result of provocation or mental illness, as if half the population of the globe consisted of saintly stoics who never succumbed to fury, frustration, or greed (Pearson, 1997: 7).

She claims that women and girls do contribute to rates of violent crime as conspirators to murder or members of girl gangs. In order to substantiate the point that women and girls do engage in violent behaviour and are not as innocent as society perceives them to be, Pearson outlines the details of several cases of female violence in her book.

The 1997 case concerning the 14 year-old Saanich, B.C. girl, Reena Virk, who was beaten and left to drown by seven girls and a boy, brought forth several newspaper articles making claims about the nature of girls' violence. In one recent article, the journalist claims that messages of power associated with aggression that are found in the media and popular culture are encouraging girls to engage in violence. The article quotes professor Sybille Artz, who claims that "teenaged girls are becoming more violent and that's a response to the main message they get from everywhere: Whatever you do, look sexy doing it" (Toronto Star, Dec.9, 1997: C3). The article states that Artz and other experts claim that there is now a brewing anger and frustration that exists among young girls. They argue that this frustration is being exerted outwards in acts of violence, whereas before it was inflicted inwards with eating disorders and suicide attempts. One expert claims that "media images and lack of support at home have left girls with low self-esteem and a desperate need for male attention", and that it is this need that fuels the competition over boys which results in the use of violence to get what girls want (Toronto Star, Dec.9, 1997: C3).

Print journalists typified the issues of girls' gang involvement and violence as a social problem later than did social scientists, as print media claims appear to have begun emerging only

in the 1960s. However, print journalists' early claims about girls' gang involvement and violence were similar to those made by social scientists, in that they argued that girls were typically auxiliary members of male gangs, subservient, and promiscuous. Print journalists' claims began to differ from those of social scientists in the early 1980s, when they continued to portray girls as engaging in a variety of more violent forms of delinquency in order to show their equality. The experts who were chosen to explain the increase exhibited in statistics, claimed that the increase was due to a combination of girls' desire for fun, belonging and liberation. In contrast, during the late-1970s and the 1980s, other social scientists were arguing that this liberation hypothesis did not apply to these young girls, as they were not consciously aware of the goals of the Women's Movement, and were engaging in violence due to social forces acting against them. The more recent claims of print journalists and social scientists also appear to be at odds in that the print journalists appear to emphasize that girls are engaging in more crime, and are becoming more violent and ruthless in their offences. Social scientists usually do not discuss in-depth whether levels of girls' violence are increasing, but choose to focus on the factors which predispose young girls to enter gangs and engage in violence. Such patterns in the recent claims of print journalists and social scientists are examined and discussed further in Chapter V, which presents the results of a content analysis conducted on selected Canadian print media and social science documents. Neither of the two claims-making groups are homogeneous, as they each present evolving and contradictory claims about girls' gang involvement and violence. Due to the contradictions within and between their claims, and the distinctive rhetoric used in their claims over time, I argue that the phenomenon of girls' gang involvement and violence has been constructed as a social problem with two different meanings representative of each claims-making group's views and interests.

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

1. Introduction to Content Analysis:

The methodology for this portion of the thesis consists of a content analysis of a sample of published social science and print media literature, published between 1970 and 1998, which addresses girls' gang involvement and violence. The purpose of traditional content analysis is to "transform written text into highly reliable quantitative data" (Singleton Jr., Straits & Straits, 1993: 381). I seek to describe how social scientists and Canadian print journalists use certain rhetoric in their claims about girls' gang involvement and violence (latent content analysis), and to show whether there has been an increase in this kind of claims-making in recent years (manifest content analysis). Due to the qualitative and exploratory nature of this study, the constructionist perspective taken, and the fact that the system of categories being used relies on a degree of subjective interpretation of how claims-makers make claims, a reliability or validity check will not be carried out.

1.1 Social Constructionist Latent Content Analysis:

Latent content analysis is a qualitative measure of the deeper structural meaning of a source (Singleton Jr., Straits & Straits, 1993). In this thesis, I use Best's (1990) model of the logical structure of claims-making to highlight the different claims that have been made by social scientists and Canadian print journalists about girls' gang involvement and violence over the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. I define the categories of the content that will be addressed and analyzed in the latent content analysis according to this model, as well as show how each claims-maker organizes and represents their claims about this issue in a document through the use of rhetoric.

Best argues that claims-makers make and present their claims in a certain way in an attempt to persuade others that a particular condition is a problem which needs to be solved in a particular way (Best, 1990: 24). In his model, Best refers to Stephen Toulmin's (1958)

examination of arguments model. Toulmin states that every argument has a structure in which reference is made to "the claim or conclusion whose merits we are seeking to establish...and the facts we appeal to as a foundation for the claim - what I shall refer to as our data" (cited in Best, 1990: 25). Toulmin states that the claim and the data are linked by the claims-maker through a reference to warrants "which can act as bridges, and authorise the sort of step to which our particular argument commits us" (cited in Best, 1990: 25).

Best refers to grounds statements as providing the socially constructed facts that are the foundation for the claims the claims-maker makes. Grounds statements include definitions (statements of domain and orientation), typifying examples to encourage the reader to identify with the issue, and numeric estimates of the problem's extent. In Best's model, warrants justify making conclusions from the grounds. Warrant statements frame the social problem in such a way that the people to be persuaded can relate to the claim, as they fall into a field that deems the claim valid. In this sense, claims-makers represent the problem as negatively affecting various different groups in society. Warrant statements, for example, can emphasize that blameless victims are affected by the problem, and highlight the associated evils which accompany the problem, the deficient policies that do not deal with the problem, historical continuity or discontinuity with regard to the problem, and the rights and freedoms the problem compromises. Best also discusses how claims-makers make conclusions based on their claims about the social problem. These conclusions usually consist of calls to alleviate the social problem, and touch on the need for awareness, prevention, social control policies, and other objectives (Best, 1990: 38-9) (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. BEST'S (1990) MODEL OF THE LOGICAL STRUCTURE OF CLAIMS-MAKING

GROUNDS (fact/data claims)	WARRANTS (value claims)	CONCLUSIONS (action claims)
a) Definitions i) domain ii) orientation b) Typifying Examples c) Numeric Estimates i) incidence estimates ii) growth estimates iii) range claims	a) Value of Children (or Victims) b) Blameless Victims c) Associated Evils d) Deficient Policies c) Historical Continuity f) Rights and Freedoms	a) Awareness b) Prevention c) Social Control Policies d) Other Objectives

Best's model of the logical structure of claims-making is used to isolate the various claims that have been made from 1970 to early 1998, and the rhetorical devices used by social scientists and Canadian print journalists. Due to time constraints, I was not able to analyze the latent content of all of the documents that were published during the specified time frame; instead I conducted the latent content analysis on a selected sample from the total number of documents found. Not necessarily all of the claims-makers in the particular sample of documents that was analyzed made grounds, warrants and conclusion statements. A discussion of the conclusion statements made by social scientists and Canadian print journalists is reserved for a separate chapter (Chapter VI), as I had to venture outside of the sample in order to analyze the kinds of recommendations for policy each claims-making group has recently made with respect to this issue.

Furthermore, in the latent content analysis of the sample of social scientist and Canadian print media material, I identify the presence of certain images about the nature of girls who are involved in gangs and violent behaviour. The popularity of the images and the frequency with which they appear in social science and Canadian print media publications is presented with the results of the manifest content analysis.

1.2. Social Constructionist Manifest Content Analysis:

Manifest content analysis refers to the surface structure present in the document in question, and consists of the elements in the document that can be physically counted (Singleton Jr., Straits & Straits, 1993). In this thesis, the manifest content analysis consists of a numerical assessment of the number of articles or research published by social scientists and Canadian print journalists over the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, that explicitly make claims about girls' gang involvement and violence. Moreover, the manifest content analysis involves an assessment of the popularity of the images of girls' violence and gang involvement identified in the latent content analysis. The manifest content analysis will be used to determine whether there has been a dramatic increase in expert and print media attention to the issues of girls' involvement in gangs and violence in recent years, as well as to assess the popularity of certain images of this problem per claims-making group.

1.3 Limitations:

It has been argued that content analysis is not an 'objective' research method (Reiner, 1997: 192), despite its use by social scientists working with an objectivist as opposed to a constructionist perspective. The coding categories with which to classify the material need to be created by the researcher and thus reflect the researcher's subjective interpretation of what information pertaining to the issue being addressed is important. The researcher's subjectivity is further part of this research, as the researcher inevitably alters the meaning of such pre-set categories to fit the nature of the material being studied. Furthermore, the research is affected by the researcher's subjectivity during the process of interpreting the content and classifying it into particular coding categories (Reiner, 1997: 193). Although the fact that researcher bias does enter into the research and that the results may not be replicable may be a problem from an objectivist perspective, content analysis is ultimately a useful research tools to isolate patterns in claims-making about girls' violence and gang involvement by print journalists and social scientists.

2. Data Collection:

Extensive computer and manual searches of social science literature and news indexes were conducted of materials published from 1970 to April of 1998[3]. The month of April, 1998 was the point at which the search was cut off due to time constraints, and due to the fact that there were very few social science materials and Canadian news indexes available in April, at the time the thesis was written. The timeline of 1970-1998 was chosen to provide a sufficient time frame to assess how social scientists and Canadian print journalists portray girls' gang involvement and violence in contemporary society, and to determine whether there has been an increase in coverage of this issue by the two inter-connected claims-making groups in recent years.

2.1 Social Problems Experts Sample:

I began the collection of the social problems experts sample of literature from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s by examining bibliographies of a few previously known sources. Upon examination of these bibliographies, a snowballing process was started, as each bibliography referred to new sources. The criterion required for inclusion in this sample was that the titles of the books or journal articles had to make explicit claims about the nature of girls' gang involvement and/or violence. Nonetheless, I have included in my sample several sources that do not make explicit claims in their titles because these sources make explicit claims within their pages, and such sources were previously known to me through general research on my thesis topic. The criteria for inclusion of those sources without explicit claims in the title, consisted of claims made in the body of the articles with regards to trends in girls' violence, girls' gang involvement, and the seriousness of girls' offending relative to that of boys.

The bibliographic snowballing process was supplemented by a computer search of Sociofile and Criminal Justice Abstracts, in order to acquire a more representative sample. The

[3] Searches were conducted of both English and French language sources, however the majority of the sources found which addressed the issue of girls' violence and gang involvement in depth were published in the English language, and thus make up the research sample.

keywords used were "female delinquency" and "females and gangs" for the search of Sociofile, and " female delinquency", "female violence", and "female gangs" for the search of Criminal Justice Abstracts. Once again, the key criterion for inclusion was explicit claims about girls' gang involvement and/or violence in the titles. However, certain journal articles that do not make explicit claims in their titles were included, based on abstracts which informed of explicit claims about girls' gang involvement and/or violence made in the body of the articles. The sources collected were authored primarily by social scientists.

The latent content analysis of this social science sample includes the analysis of seventeen sources that were analyzed because they presented a broad range of claims about this issue, and were devoted only to discussions of girls' violence and/or gang involvement (see Appendix A for a list of the sources included in the social science sample). The manifest content analysis includes an assessment of the number of social science materials addressing girls' gang involvement and/or violence that were published from 1970 to April 1998. It includes an assessment of the number of times certain images of the nature of girls' involvement in gangs and violence appeared in the seventeen documents referred to in the latent content analysis.

2.2 Canadian Print Journalists Sample:

The Canadian print journalists sample was derived through manual searches of the Canadian Newspaper Index, Canadian Index and Canadian Periodical Index at Morisset Library, University of Ottawa[4]. As with the social science sample, the criterion for inclusion was that the title of the articles contain explicit claims about the nature of girls' gang involvement and/or violence. For example, articles that were included were characterized by such headline claims as

[4] A computer search of the database L'Actualité was conducted to find French newspaper articles concerning girls' violence and gang involvement. Interestingly, only two articles were found which addressed this issue, and only made general claims about the nature of girls' violence in the context of reporting the details of the Reena Virk case. Thus, it appears that the French language press in Canada did not construct the issue of girls' violence and gang involvement as a social problem as much as the English language press.

"Violence on rise among girls" (Toronto Star, Dec. 9, 1997: C3) and "Girl crime turns grisly - charges soar..." (Winnipeg Free Press, Oct. 10, 1995: A1, A2). The articles that were excluded usually made statements about details of a case involving young female offenders and did not make claims about the quality or quantity of their involvement, such as "Teen girls charged in killing" (Calgary Herald, July 11, 1995: B1) and "Four girls arrested in student's mugging" (Winnipeg Free Press, March 16, 1993: B1). While these articles do describe the incidence of girls' violence, they were excluded from the sample as they tend to exclude the broad claims that girls' violence is on the increase which construct this issue as a social problem. I relied on this claims-making criterion very heavily for the print media search, as the indexes provided only the titles of the newspaper or magazine articles, abstracts of the articles were not available, and the content of few articles was previously known to me.

For the manual search of the Canadian Newspaper Index, which lists only the newspaper articles that were published from 1977 to 1992, I used the keywords "juvenile delinquency", " gangs", "young offenders", "adolescent girls", and "education and schools - violence". I then conducted a search of the Canadian Index, which lists the titles of newspaper and magazine articles published from 1993 up until April 1998. I used the same criterion for inclusion in the sample, and the keywords of "gangs", "young offenders", "adolescent girls" and "education and schools - violence" in this search. In order to represent some media coverage (specifically that of magazines) from the 1970s, which was not included in the previous two manual searches, I conducted a search of the Canadian Periodical Index covering the years of 1970-April 1998. For this search I used such keywords as "violence", "girls", " juvenile delinquency", "gangs", and "problem children", and only found magazine articles which made claims about girls' gang involvement and/or violence in their titles in the 1990s.

To ensure that no articles pertaining to girls' gang involvement and/or violence were missed by the manual searches, I conducted a computer search of the Canadian Business and

Current Affairs Index (CBCA). The keywords used for this search were "girls and violence" and "girls and gangs". Unfortunately, this search was not useful in ensuring that a complete and representative sample was acquired for the specified timeline of 1970 to April 1998, as the CBCA was only put into computerized format in 1988.

In order to select a representative sample for the Canadian print journalist latent content analysis, I included all of the articles published from 1970 to April 1998 from five Canadian newspapers and one magazine - Winnipeg Free Press, Calgary Herald, Toronto Star, Vancouver Sun, Globe & Mail, and Maclean's magazine. These news publications were chosen after my examination of the Canadian news searches indicated that they appeared to have the most coverage of girls' gang involvement and/or violence over the specified timeline. This selection process yielded a sample of thirty news articles which will be examined in the latent content analysis (see Appendix A for a list of sources included in the Canadian print journalists sample). I then acquired copies of these selected articles through a microfilm search in the media library at Morisset Library, University of Ottawa.

Similar to the social scientist manifest content analysis, that of the Canadian print journalists involves an assessment of the number of articles that made claims about the nature of girls' gang involvement and /or violence and were published from 1970 to April 1998. The manifest content analysis also includes an assessment of the number of times certain images of these issues appear in the thirty news documents discussed in the latent content analysis.

2.3 Limitations:

One limitation to these methods of collecting data involves coding mistakes. Due to the use of certain keywords and the fact that explicit claims in document titles were used as the criterion for inclusion, certain social science and print media sources may have been overlooked, and excluded from the sample. For example, due to time constraints, I could not go through all of the newspaper articles addressing youth crime which were listed under the gender-neutral

keyword "young offenders". Therefore, articles that discussed youth crime in the headline and potentially could have made claims specifically about young girls within them, were not included in the sample. Similarly, by using the snowballing process to collect the social science sample, I was treating the titles of entire books or journal articles as representative of their content. Thus, certain sources that did not make claims about girls' involvement in gangs and/or violence in their titles but in their pages, might not have been included. Furthermore, different newspapers frequently cover the same news stories, and newspaper chains such as Southam Press and the Sun newspapers often include the same news stories in all of their newspapers. Due to this fact, articles which covered similar stories may have been counted several times, thus distorting the number of actual events of girls' gang involvement and/or violence. The purpose of determining the number of social science and Canadian print journalist sources published from 1970 to early 1998 is strictly to indicate whether there has been an increase in attention to these issues by these two inter-related claims-making groups in recent years, and not to assess the number of incidents involving female perpetrators.

Another limitation to these methods of data collection concerns the availability of materials. Unfortunately, the Canadian Newspaper Index (later known as the Canadian News Index and the Canadian Index) was not put into print until 1977, so my Canadian newspaper sample is not representative of the entire 1970s. Additionally, I discovered that the Canadian news indexes may not include all of the relevant articles that were published in Canadian newspapers. I was primarily conducting the manual searches of the news indexes to acquire Canadian news articles that were published in the past, and to acquire relevant articles in newspapers from across Canada. In the wake of the Reena Virk case in British Columbia in November of 1997, I was diligently examining the Toronto Star and the Globe & Mail for articles which made claims about the nature of girls' gang involvement and/or violence. When I began my search of the news indexes, I found that some of the recent, relevant articles that I had found in

the Toronto Star and the Globe & Mail were not listed in the Canadian Index or the CBCA. This leads me to believe that other national newspaper articles which address girls' gang involvement and/or violence might not have been included in the indexes, and thus excluded from my sample. As there are no other Canadian news indexes in existence, I had to use those that were available in my search, which resulted in a potentially unrepresentative Canadian print journalists sample.

Despite these limitations, the social science and Canadian print journalists samples should be representative enough to illustrate the myriad of claims that have been made and are currently being made about the nature of girls' gang involvement and violence. The samples should also be sufficient to determine whether there has been an increase in expert and print media attention to this issue in recent years, and isolate the double construction of the phenomenon of girls' gang involvement and violence.

CHAPTER V: DATA

1. CANADIAN PRINT JOURNALISTS LATENT CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS:

Latent content analysis involves the qualitative measure of the deeper structural meaning of a source (Singleton Jr., Straits & Straits, 1993). In order to isolate the rhetoric used by Canadian print journalists about girls' gang involvement and violence, Best's (1990) model of the logical structure of claims-making was used to analyze the latent content of the media's claims. Best's model was initially designed to highlight the rhetoric found in the claims-making activities of television network news about the social problem of missing children. Best divided this rhetoric into three categories: grounds, warrants and conclusions. Grounds statements serve as data concerning the definition, nature, and occurrence of the social problem. They have three components: definitional statements which establish the domain or boundaries of the problem and the orientation taken toward it, examples which typify the problem and suggest how it is to be understood, and numeric estimates of the incidence and growth of the problem. Warrants statements express reasons why something must be done about the social problem, and thus indicate that action against the negative social condition is justified. Examples of warrant statements include statements of values, statements assigning blame or blamelessness to those alleged to be perpetrators or victims, statements about the evils associated with the persistence of the problem, the deficient policies which do not adequately alleviate the problem, the fundamental rights and freedoms the alleged problem supports or violates, and the historical continuity or discontinuity of efforts to resolve the problem. Conclusion statements are essentially those calls for action made by claims-makers which anticipate a solution to the social problem, and include statements about prevention and awareness building techniques (Best, 1990: 25-40).

As this model was originally designed to identify the rhetoric found in claims made by the media, it is appropriate to use in this attempt to isolate the rhetoric in claims made by Canadian print journalists about the social problem of girls' gang involvement and violence.

However, Best's model addressed the rhetoric in claims made about missing children by claims-makers who acted as advocates for victims of child abduction and abuse. It is thus not completely applicable to this exploration of the rhetoric in claims about girls' violence and gang involvement, as the claims made by print journalists are not usually made by individuals acting as advocates for violent female gang members, but by those who claim to inform the public about the increasing nature of the social problem. Due to the fact that this analysis regards claims about perpetrators and not victims, warrant statements such as those concerning the value of victims, and the rights and freedoms violated by the social problem are not addressed. The category of historical continuity/discontinuity was altered for both print journalists and social science samples to refer to claims which addressed the persistence of the problem of girls' violence and gang involvement over time, instead of the historical continuity/discontinuity of efforts to resolve the problem. Furthermore, not all the documents analyzed included all of the grounds, warrants and conclusion statements addressed by Best. In fact, so few implicit or explicit conclusion statements were found in the claims made in print journalists and social science samples of this study that I went outside of the sample to investigate the calls for action each claims-making group had made recently. Therefore, a discussion of the conclusion statements made by Canadian print journalists and social scientists with regards to girls' gang involvement and violence is included later, in Chapter VI. Now, I summarize, by decade, the common themes and results of the latent content analysis completed on the thirty documents in the Canadian print journalists sample.

1.1 Who Speaks:

Media reporters often quote experts in their articles to make their stories and claims more credible (Sherizen, 1978; Best, 1989; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991). Throughout the thirty Canadian newspaper articles which were analyzed for this study (see Appendix B), several different kinds of experts were quoted. These experts included criminologists, sociologists, psychologists, social workers, lawyers, judges, group home workers and police officials. The authors of the articles did

not solely rely on quotes from experts to fill the content as there were several statements/claims which were not associated with any professional source and thus likely came from the journalist/reporter who compiled the article. Despite the fact that the experts quoted provide distinct and varied knowledge about the social problem being discussed, their claims will be associated with those made by print journalists because media reporters have the power to control the appearance of the comments made by experts to suit the theme of their stories (Greek, 1994; Barak, 1995; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991).

1.2 Claims Made by Print Journalists in the 1970s & 1980s

GROUNDS

Only two articles were found for this time period which addressed girls' gang involvement and/or violence and were published in the five Canadian newspapers and one magazine which were included in the sample [Calgary Herald (*CH*), Vancouver Sun (*VS*), Toronto Star (*TS*), Winnipeg Free Press (*WFP*), Globe & Mail (*G&M*), Maclean's][5]. One more article which appeared in the Montreal Gazette (*MG*) was included to supplement the sample to make a total of three articles which were analyzed. The three articles present different grounds statements. Two of the articles (*MG*, Nov. 15, 1979: 41; *WFP*, Jan. 6, 1984: 3) defined the problem as being one of an increased level of violent crime amongst girls. These two articles quoted experts who claimed that 'increased' levels of violence among young girls were caused by such factors as broken homes and backgrounds of violence, poor social skills and women's emancipation. One police officer claimed that "she's [the delinquent girl] out to prove to her peers that she's just as capable of committing acts of delinquency as any male" (*MG*, Nov. 15, 1979: 41); on the same note, a probation officer asserted that "in the old days, sexuality was a

[5] In order to present a uniform method of referencing, the sources in the Canadian print journalists sample were referenced by source and not by author. This was done because a number of the newspaper articles in the sample did not provide the name of the journalist.

way of getting affection and controlling men, whereas now they [women/girls] have more confidence to demand that their rights be met" (*MG*, Nov. 15, 1979: 41). The other article published during this time frame (*WFP*, May 16, 1979: 51) claimed that female delinquents were not involved in violent offences, but were more commonly involved in such minor offences as shoplifting and prostitution. The experts quoted in this article made a causal link between female delinquency and the girls' personal maladjustment, in that girls who committed crimes were suffering from a low opinion of themselves (*WFP* May 16, 1979: 51).

Two of the three newspaper articles provided typifying examples. In these two articles, the reader is introduced to two female delinquents, Susie and Sandie. Each article introduced the reader to these girls with the use of the kind of introductory grabber discussed by Best (1990). Susie is introduced in this manner:

> She has big wide eyes, curly hair and a wiggle in her tight blue jeans. She doesn't look like a delinquent but she isn't afraid of anything or anybody. She was only 11 when she began hanging out with a group of local toughs. Now, at 15, she's already been in court 27 times on charges ranging from breaking, entering and theft to robbery and assault causing bodily harm. She's spent six months in training schools and the last two months in a group home. "I wouldn't bash somebody's skull in for nothing but if they bug me, watch out" (*MG* Nov. 15, 1979: 41).

Sandie is presented with this introductory grabber:

> When Sandie was 14, she was arrested with three boys for drinking under age. Three days earlier, she had bolted from the last of the many foster homes she had been in and out of since age four, hitch-hiking 40 kilometres to the city to wander the streets by day and sleep in them by night (*WFP* May 16, 1979: 51).

Each of these examples typifies the issue as a problem by providing proof of the negative and extreme nature of the individual girls' lives and criminal activity. Furthermore, these two newspaper articles provide assessments of the problem's magnitude by giving examples of official statistics or statements estimating the growth of the problem:

> Metropolitan Toronto Police figures indicate that not only is the number of cases of female juvenile delinquency increasing, to 5,037 last year from 4,546 in 1977,

> but a greater number of girls are becoming involved in more serious and more violent crimes at an earlier age (*MG* Nov. 15, 1979: 41)
>
> In 1981, 21 juvenile girls were charged in Winnipeg with assault. In 1982, that figure doubled. By August of last year, 61 girls were charged with assault. The number of juvenile girls charged with violent crimes such as assault, break and enter and armed robbery is growing at a faster rate than boys, statistics show (*WFP* Jan. 6, 1984: 3).

However, the other article which alleged that female delinquents tended to stay away from serious and violent offences, published official statistics showing how few girls were charged with offences compared to boys:

> The latest Statistics Canada figures show that more than 8,000 girls aged seven to 17 were charged with offences under the federal Juvenile Delinquents Act in 1973, less than one-quarter of the 36,000 total for boys (*WFP* May 16, 1979: 51).

Similar to this claim, one of the articles which argued that there was an increase in female violence revealed that "male juvenile offenders still outnumber females more than five to one", but that experts were nonetheless worried by the fact that more girls were moving through the criminal justice system (*WFP* Jan.6, 1984: 3).

WARRANTS

While these three newspaper articles described varying trends in female delinquency and presented different grounds statements, they discussed similar warrants, which included claims about the evils which were associated with the problem and would persist if action was not taken (Best, 1990: 34). The articles argued that female delinquency, whether increasing or not, was often associated with alcohol and drug abuse, sexual promiscuity and poor school success (*MG* Nov. 15, 1979: 41; *WFP* May 16, 1979: 51; *WFP* Jan. 6, 1984: 3). The two articles that maintained that there was an increase in female violent offending, argued that female delinquency was now associated with a greater amount of assault (*MG* Nov. 15, 1979: 41; *WFP* Jan.6, 1984: 3). Conversely, one police sergeant quoted in the other article argued that girls were usually not

the instigators of violent or major offences on the rare occasions they commit them (*WFP* May 16, 1979: 51).

The varying claims about the nature of girls' delinquency and violence found in these three newspaper articles marks the beginning of a new perception of female offending by print journalists. There emerges in the 1990s, I argue, a uniform conception of girls as more violent offenders in the claims-making of print journalists.

1.3 Claims Made by Print Journalists in the 1990s

GROUNDS

Definition of the Problem: Twenty-seven newspaper articles which were published between 1990 to April 1998 were included in the sample and were subsequently analyzed. The majority of the articles presented common grounds statements and defined the problem to be that of 'rapidly increasing' levels of violence and gang activity amongst young girls in Canada. This trend in the print journalists' claims-making during the 1990s expressed a great urgency and danger about the problem, which is evident by the headlines of some of the articles in the sample: "Girls growing more violent, aggressive" (*TS*, April, 7, 1998: A22), "Teen's torture again reveals girls' brutality" (*G&M*, Jan. 20, 1998: A1), "Violence among girls on rise" (*CH*, Feb. 16, 1996: B5), "Girls often meaner than boys, police say" (*CH*, Oct. 21, 1995: B9), and "Girl gang members more violent than boys, experts agree" (*G&M*, Dec.14, 1994: A14). The print media claimants attributed this 'increased' level of violence among girls to be due to several causes, many of which were common to several articles. Seven articles argued that increased levels of violence among young girls were due to a change in society's values and rules:

> [Constable] Hosley points to the escalating manner of teen violence more than numbers. "Ten years ago, if there was a fight, the kids punched someone out. Now, if there's someone down, they step on them. It's the moral framework that's changed" (*TS* Nov. 28, 1997: A2).

> Reena's [Virk] death...feels like further evidence that rules are changing without adult approval (*G&M* Nov. 28, 1997: A1).

Eight journalists out of twenty-seven in the sample accounted for increases in girls' violence and gang involvement by the personal maladjustment of the female perpetrators. These print journalists argued that the increases were due to girls who suffered from low self-esteem or psychological problems, and had experienced unhappiness or anger:

> ...these are "networks and groupings" of disturbed, unhappy girls who seek status and power through beating up others (*TS* Nov. 28, 1997: A2).

> ...girls turn to violence when they have nothing in their lives that makes them feel valued (*VS* Nov. 25, 1997: A1)

Four of these print media claimants emphasized that girls are further maladjusted in that they engage in violent crime for the thrill or for fun, and carry no remorse for their acts:

> Jennifer, a 14-year-old Calgary student who has flirted with trouble, thinks she knows why [more young women are choosing aggression to solve their problems] - the risk-taking can be fun (*CH* Nov. 23, 1996: B1).

> Whatever the reasons, some teenage girls clearly are experiencing acute - at times uncontainable - levels of anger and are showing far more willingness to strike out. Researchers and clinicians are also discovering a chilling lack of empathy among young girls - a quality that, until recently, appeared to be more common among adolescent boys (*Maclean's*, Dec. 8, 1997: 16).

Another causal definition of the problem which presented itself in current Canadian print journalists' articles concerned the role played by violence in popular culture and the media in the lives of impressionable young girls. Seven articles featured quotes predominantly from Canadian professor Sybille Artz who argued, along with others, that some girls are highly influenced in their delinquent acts by images that glamourize sex, violence and gang life which appear in the media:

> 'Those girls who are looking for messages of power and for a way to achieve status are being seduced by media images of women that bring together in all kinds of ways the images of sex and violence' (*TS* Dec. 9, 1997: C3).
> Toronto writer Patricia Pearson has stated that girls are likely thinking that it's acceptable, if you're female, to be demonstrably angry and to express yourself forcefully. Pearson points out the pop-culture models, such as Madonna and

> Alanis Morissette, confirm this conduct in their music (*TS* April 7, 1998: A22).

> [Criminologist Ray] Corrado says girls are influenced by male aggression and end up mimicking the culture of violence that surrounds them...The twisted message - fight but look sexy while doing it - is perhaps best embodied by Canadian beauty queen Danielle House, who lost her crown for fighting and was featured recently on the cover of Playboy wearing boxing gloves and little else (*VS* Dec. 1, 1997: A1, B8).

Moreover, ten of the print journalists and the experts they quoted argued that this pressure to be sexy and powerful, which is placed on girls by popular culture, causes intense sexual rivalry and competition over boys, which in turn leads to violence:

> When tensions rise - among girls, a fight can be ignited by as little as a slight over appearance or competition over a boy - things can get out of hand very quickly (*Maclean's*, Dec. 8, 1997: 14).

> In the subculture Artz describes, most girl violence centres on boys. Sometimes the girls fight to give their boyfriends a rush. More often, they beat up someone who has broken one of the key gender rules - particularly a girl deemed a slut... or a girl who flirts with another girl's boyfriend (*TS* Dec. 6, 1997: E4).

Twelve out of the twenty-seven print media claimants focused on greater equality between men and women due to the Women's Movement as an explanation for increased levels of violence among young girls. Some argued that girls were tired of being viewed as passive victims and were seeking equality with them by engaging in more crime and more violence, which have been considered as areas traditionally dominated by men. Typical claims blaming the Women's Movement for increases in female violence and gang involvement included:

> 'Girls have been doing this [violent crime] with increasing frequency over the last five years, probably because there is an increase in their comfort level with the use of weapons and a sense of empowerment with tactics that have been traditionally dominated by males' (*G&M* Jan. 20, 1998: A1).

> 'It is not surprising to see this happening, given that women are entering various arenas that were the bulwarks of men' (*CH* Dec. 1, 1995: B8).

> 'As the lines between the sexes become blurred, women are picking up some of the negative aspects of equality along with the positive ones' (*WFP* Oct. 10, 1995: A1).

Thirteen of the print media claimants attributed increases in girls' violence and gang involvement to parental abuse or neglect, and the incidence of broken homes in the lives of female delinquents. These claims usually consisted of short sentences which argued that young female delinquents often come from violence-prone, dysfunctional families, but the journalists did not really explore the reasons for the dysfunctions: "Experts say that many violent teens come from dysfunctional families...Violence in the home means students arrive at school filled with hatred and aggression" (*VS* Dec.1, 1997: B8); "Frequently, he [University of Alberta law professor Jim Robb] says, these girls have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused by family members (*TS* Dec.10, 1996: C1,C2); and "He [psychologist Fred Mathews] said many female gang members are angry and rebellious, largely-owing to an abusive or dysfunctional family. Gangs offer a sense of family, he said" (*CH* Oct. 21, 1995: B9).

Four of the twenty-seven print journalists in the sample quoted experts who claimed that in fact there was no increase in the amount of girls' violence and gang involvement. Instead, these experts asserted that there existed an increase in the willingness to report and charge girls with more serious and violent crimes in the wake of changing sex roles in society. Once again, these grounds claims appeared rarely, and when they did appear, they were not given as much attention and support as the claims about an increase in the volume of girls' violent offending. Some examples include:

> Professor Steve Hart of Simon Fraser University's psychology department chalks some of that [increased assault charges against girls] up to higher reporting and some to the fact that, until recently, women have received an easier ride from the justice system (*TS* Dec. 10, 1997: C3).

> Prof. Hackler [Sociology professor, University of Alberta] points out, however, that many male and female juvenile crimes are for minor incidents that earlier would not have hit the courts. Schoolyard scuffles once settled by a principal now result in the creation of a young offender (*G&M* July 15, 1997: A5).

> 'The increase could solely be due to people's willingness to report crimes by women to the police and police willingness to charge them, rather than to any changes in girls' behaviour' (*TS* Aug.12, 1995: C4).

Typifying Examples: Fifteen of the twenty-seven print journalists in the 1990s sample introduced and typified the problem of increased levels of girls' violence and gang involvement with an emotionally-riveting grabber in order to hold the reader's attention. Some of the grabbers presented details about a case involving girl violence from the perspective of the victim. Other grabbers simply presented details of several particularly violent or 'brutal' incidences of girl violence. All of the grabbers, whether quoting personalized atrocity tales or summarizing 'brutal' girl violence as a frequently occurring event, had the effect of shaping the problem in the mind of the reader as dramatic and dangerous. Some examples of these typifying grabbers include:

> A group of junior high school girls attack a classmate, shearing her hair with a kitchen knife. Guests gathered for a "sweet 16" birthday party run into another group of girls at the mall. An argument breaks out over a boy, which leads to a brawl and criminal charges. Two junior high girls, both very drunk, get into a fight over clothes. The fight grows so violent one of the girls is kicked in the head until she loses consciousness. These aren't scenarios from an episode of NYPD Blue. They're recent cases from the files of Edmonton's Youth Legal Aid office (*TS* Dec.10, 1996: C1).

> On the cool blue tiled floor, just below the chipped bathroom sinks and vending machines where you can buy a condom or a fake tattoo for a dollar, Calgary teen Isabel Cho lay dying...Police believe the 19 year-old was assaulted in the restroom during a brawl following an altercation in the corridor. Three young city women face manslaughter charges (*CH* Nov.23, 1996: B1).

> Girls used to be made of sugar and spice and everything nice, but today experts on youth violence see some of them as a dangerous threat to society - ruthless, volatile and brutal (*CH* Oct.21, 1995: B9).

> Max Broyko was 19 when he died. He was shot where he sat, in the driver seat of his car - he was next to his girlfriend; a second friend in the back. It was about 11pm and they were trying to figure out what to do with the rest of their Friday night. Out of nowhere, two young females appeared. One flashed a gun, demanded money. Broyko fumbled for the ignition. Then he was bleeding. Then he was dying (*CH* Dec.1, 1995: B8).

Numeric Estimates: Twenty-six of the twenty-seven print media claimants included numeric estimates and official statistics in order to provide evidence of an 'increase' in girls' violence and gang involvement. All of the references to statistics were accompanied by statements by the

reporter or experts that girls' violence and gang involvement were increasing in Canada: "Girls are the fastest-growing group of violent offenders in the country. They constitute about 25 per cent of the arrests in their age group..." (*TS* April 7, 1998: A22); "Teenage girls are committing more violent, gang-related crimes as they learn to copy male behaviour (*TS* Dec.10, 1996: C1); and "The horrifying torture and beating of a teen-ager in Kitchener, Ont., on the weekend is yet another example of what law-enforcement officials and experts say is an alarming wave of violent crimes by girls across Canada" (*G&M* Jan.20, 1998: A1). Various kinds of statistics were quoted to support these estimates of incidence and growth, such as national numbers provided by Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics studies, or statistics from local police forces. The majority of the statistics quoted by the journalists showed that there had been an increasing amount of criminal charges laid against girls in the past decade, and provided numbers as to the 'increasing' amount of violent offences with which girls had been charged or the 'growing' amount of female gangs in existence in Canada:

> Since 1986, two years after the Young Offenders Act became law, assault charge rates for girls in British Columbia alone have more than tripled, rising to 624 in 1993 from 178 that year (*Maclean's*, Dec.8, 1997: 13).
>
> The number of young women (between 12 and 17 years old) charged with violent crimes in Canada more than doubled between 1986 and 1994, according to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. In 1994, 4,903 young women were charged with violent crimes up from 1,728 in 1986. The vast majority of the charges involved assault (*VS* May 21, 1996: B6).
>
> Det.-Constable Keown estimates that girl-gang activity is experiencing growth of 15 to 20 per cent a year (*G&M* Sept.12, 1995: A10).

Frequently, the same sets of statistics were reprinted in different articles over the years. Eight of the twenty-seven print journalists accompanied the statistics with short statements claiming that violent female offenders were still the minority compared to boys, but again, this argument was usually overshadowed by the urgent theme of the articles that violence was increasing among young girls: "While overall numbers remain small compared to boys, police are charging vastly

more girls with violent crimes than they did 10 years ago" (*Maclean's*, Dec.8, 1997: 13); "Although girls only represent seven per cent of the youth gang population in Canada, they account for more than 20 per cent of arrests for youth crime, experts say" (*CH* Oct.21, 1995: B9).

Range Claims: In Best's model, range claims are defined as expressing the social problem's range. Broad range claims are arguments that virtually anyone might be affected by the problem. In this study, given the focus on perpetrators and not victims, range claims tended to address the kinds of communities where girls' violence and gang involvement might take place. Thus, these claims implied that because perpetrators were either isolated to certain neighbourhoods or were widespread, the perpetrators' violent crimes could victimize citizens in these small or widely-reaching locales. Five of the twenty-seven print media claimants implied that the 'increased' incidence of girls' violence and gang involvement was not typically restricted to big cities or lower class minority neighbourhoods anymore, but that this violence could and is happening in all communities: "The brutal slaying...is a reminder that big-city crime can just as easily lurk in smaller cities like Victoria, no matter how blissful they appear. And that is a warning that might well be sounded in almost any community across the country" (*Maclean's*, Dec.8, 1997: 16); "Authorities were initially surprised to find girls, who come from all socio-economic backgrounds throughout the Ottawa region, involved in gangs at all" (*CH* July 23: C6).

WARRANTS

Associated Evils: The print media claimants in the 1990s sample associated a range of 'evils' or negative aspects with girls' violence and gang involvement. Nine out of the twenty-seven print journalists in the sample emphasized that with 'increased' levels of girls' violence and gang involvement came more serious, typically masculine offences, such as assault, armed robbery and theft. Ten print journalists claimed that the increase in incidents of female perpetrated assault usually involved girl-on-girl attacks which were sparked by nasty looks, rumours or violations of the 'moral code' that one does not move in on someone else's boyfriend. Two print journalists in

the 1990s sample argued that the attacks or swarmings by girls were associated with the thrill of dominating and psychologically humiliating others.

With regards to gang life, five print journalists discussed its nature and asserted that girl gang members are usually associated with male gangs, and that these girls often transport weapons for them and team up with them to commit crime. They argued that within these gangs, girls are more brutal and ruthless than the boys in that the girls are "more apt to pull the trigger than males" (*G&M* Dec.14, 1994: A14). They claimed that the female members of the gangs were often altogether meaner than the male members: "...if we're going to get serious about the study of violence, we have to come to the conclusion that girls can be just as violent and in some cases even more vicious than the boys" (*CH* Oct.21, 1995: B9). These print journalists also emphasized that those girls who are associated with male gangs have a tendency to assert or gain control over their gang activity. They argued that some girl gangs have been running their own prostitution networks, and that some female auxiliary members have formed their own gangs to get away from the control and sexual abuse of male gang members: "Girls say they're tired of a lack of control, and abuse, as hangers-on to male gangs and their members" (*G&M* Dec.14, 1994: A14). Eight of the print media claimants in the 1990s sample argued that girls' violence and gang involvement was associated with increased weapons use, and alcohol and drug abuse: "Young females are now more commonly involved in gang-related activity, assaults and robberies and are using more weapons, mostly knives..." (*TS* Dec.10, 1996: C1); "They [girls] do it [attack other girls] for the same reasons males do...'ratting on someone's boyfriend, drug debts'" (*CH* Sept.14, 1995: B8).

Historical Continuity: For the purposes of this study, the meaning of the category of historical continuity was slightly altered from its original meaning in Best's model in order to better suit the patterns in claims-making found in both print journalists and social science samples. Instead of referring to the historical continuity/discontinuity of efforts to resolve the social problem, this

category refers to claims about the historical continuity or persistence of the problem itself. Eleven print media claimants of the twenty-seven in the sample alleged that the increased incidence of gang involvement and masculine crimes committed by girls, such as assault, robbery, and theft, represented a break from the traditional delinquent acts with which girls were associated in the past, such as shoplifting, running away or being the girlfriend of a male gang member:

> A similar incident [knife incident between two girls] probably wouldn't have happened 18 years ago when he [Sgt. John Middleton-Hope of the Calgary police] became a cop, he said, but females aren't just girlfriends of criminals anymore (*CH* Feb.16, 1996: B1)

> Violence among girls is especially shocking, perhaps, because it shatters stereotypes. In the past few years there has been a steady increase in the number of female gangs. Traditionally, females joined gangs of their male counterparts, for whom they used to courier weapons and drugs into nightclubs. Now, females are banding together to take care of their own business (*TS* April 7, 1998: A22).

The majority of the articles treated girls' violence and gang involvement as an 'increasing' problem, which gives the impression that this is a new problem. The print journalists frequently argued that girls were becoming more violent now than ever before and supported this with frequent descriptions of girls' violence and gang involvement as 'shocking', 'alarming' or "part of a new and disturbing pattern" (*TS* Dec.10, 1997: C1).

Blameless Victims: Sixteen of the twenty-seven print media claimants made reference to the victims of girls' violence by explaining the details of incidences of such violence, but they never explicitly referred to the blamelessness of these victims. However, they did *imply* that these victims were innocent and in the wrong place at the wrong time with references to the seemingly simplistic reasons (rumour spreading, flirting with another boy, nasty look), or absent reasons (random swarmings and rollings) for explaining the gang related attacks on them or the fights between acquaintances perpetrated by girls. In the two articles mentioned earlier which contained the gripping opening images of the young girl dying in the bathroom and the boy dying in his car, the girl and the boy were both portrayed as being victims of unprovoked attacks by young girls.

Occasionally, the victims' injuries were described which served to personalize the victimization further:

> Once out of sight of passers-by, she [Reena Virk] was set on and so viciously kicked and beaten that she suffered multiple fractures, including fractured arms and a broken neck and back (*Maclean's*, Dec.8, 1998: 12).

> The last time Tracy was downtown, five girls from the Scorpion gang repeatedly slammed her head into the side wall of Eaton's. She lost partial hearing in her left ear. She's 14 years old (*CH* July 23, 1992: C6).

Five articles made reference to the recent Reena Virk case and emphasized that Reena was an overweight, unhappy, unpopular girl who posed no threat to the girls who attacked her, but simply wanted to fit in:

> Just as chilling is the child-like explanation of why Reena, eager to be accepted, was a frequent target and knew she faced beatings. Her friend told the Victoria Times-Colonist: "She was overweight and had a low voice. Everyone was mean to her. They never gave her a chance" (*TS* Nov.28, 1997: A2).

> "She [Reena Virk] very much wanted to belong with the cool kids," recalls her friend Molly Pallman. "That's because a lot of kids would bug her - I would see her crying in the hallways. Unfortunately, that led her to being killed. She was a sweet kid." (*Maclean's*, Dec.8, 1997: 12).

Thus, print journalists implicitly focused on the innocence and blamelessness of the victims of the violent girls by making subtle references to the random nature or trivial explanations for the violent incidents.

Summary:

In sum, the majority of the grounds statements appearing within the 27 newspaper articles included in the 1990s sample defined the social problem in question to be that of the 'increasing' nature and volume of girls' violence and gang involvement. The print media claimants commonly attributed this 'increase' to factors such as changes in the values of society; the personal maladjustment of the female perpetrators; messages of sex and violence in popular culture and the media; women's increased equality with men; and dysfunctional and abusive home lives. These

claims were occasionally met with dissent by other experts, as contentions that there existed no increase in the amount of girls' violence and gang involvement were sometimes included in the articles. Most of the articles framed and introduced the problem to the reader as urgent, dramatic and widespread with the use of explicit headlines ("Girl-gang violence alarms experts", "More young women involved in violent crime", "Violence on upswing among teenage girls"), and grabbers chronicling girls' 'rapidly increasing brutality and violent' behaviour. All of the articles provided statistics which estimated the problem of girls' violence and gang involvement's extent, and frequently claims were made as to the far-reaching range of the problem's effects.

The print journalists' warrants statements in the 1990s sample are characterized by claims that girls' violence and gang involvement is: associated with the commission of more serious, typically masculine offences like assault, robbery and theft, and that these serious acts are inspired by sexual rivalry and a desire to humiliate others; linked with increased weapons use and transportation, extreme viciousness, and prostitution in gangs, as well as sexual abuse by male gang members; and associated with alcohol and drug abuse. Print media claimants treated the problem as a break from traditional female delinquency, and the reference to it as 'increasing' gave a newness to the condition. They also implied that the reasons for increased assaults and masculine crimes by girls were senseless, as they often suggested that the victims of the violent girls were blameless and in the wrong place at the wrong time.

2. SOCIAL PROBLEMS EXPERTS LATENT CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS:

Best's (1990) model of the logical structure of claims-making was designed to isolate rhetoric in claims about social problems made primarily by the media. This posed some problems for its application to claims made in social science literature. Not all social scientists who addressed the issue of girls' violence and gang involvement were doing so to introduce a new or increasing social problem. Many were conducting studies on the behaviour of delinquent girls or

girl gang members in an attempt to gain an in-depth understanding of the causes and the dynamics of female gang membership and violence. Thus, these social scientists did not necessarily define or represent girls' violence and gang involvement as an urgent or increasing social problem, but as a social phenomenon which required more exploration. While many of the social scientists' claims addressed the same issues discussed by the print media claimants, several of the social scientists did not frame the issue in terms of grounds and warrants for change of an increasing or evil condition. However, the same categories from Best's model will be applied to the social science literature in the sample in order to isolate the rhetoric in their claims. Some categories applied to the content of the literature while others did not. For example, the category of blameless victims was not addressed in the social science sample because the majority of the social scientists were interested in studying the behaviour and life-styles of the female perpetrators and not their victims.

A total of seventeen social science sources were analyzed: five from the 1970s; five from the 1980s; and seven from the 1990s. Seven social science sources were chosen from the 1990s to better represent this decade, as more sources were published concerning this topic in the 1990s than in the other decades. Due to time constraints, this sample was much smaller than the print journalists sample, as the length of the social science sources was much greater than the newspaper articles and a larger sample would have taken longer to analyze.

2.1 Who Speaks:

Within the social science sample, the seventeen social scientists who authored the sources include sociologists, criminologists including several feminist criminologists, one psychologist, one education specialist, and one advocate with a background in law and social science.

2.2 Claims Made by Social Scientists in the 1970s:

GROUNDS

Definition: None of the five social scientists in the 1970s sample overtly defined girls' violence and gang involvement as a problem per se, but usually discussed the causes of the phenomenon. These claimants attributed girls' violence and gang involvement to several different causes. Brown (1977) and Thompson and Lozes (1976) claimed that female gang involvement and violence was due to the girls' personal maladjustment, in that they were somehow psychologically flawed or socially inadequate. Brown (1977) argued that girls joined gangs to gratify their psychological needs:

> Because some females are less attractive than others, less sociable than others, less proficient at school work, or new to the neighborhood or school districts, an alternative route may be used to satisfy needs for popularity. Furthermore, when the ego formation, or fails to provide an atmosphere of stability, the female may look elsewhere to gratify her psychological needs (Brown, 1997: 223).

Thompson and Lozes (1976) described the female gang member as:

> a person with a marked distrust of authority, to tendency to blame others for her problems and a generalized disposition to resolve problems in ways that show a disregard for social customs and rules. She tends to react readily with emotion, seeks thrills, and is involved in the toughness ethic (Thompson & Lozes, 1976: 2).

Thompson and Lozes (1976) asserted that female crime was increasing, and claimed that sex role socialization theory explained female gang involvement: "with the change in sex roles and sex role socialization which has been occurring during the last decade, it is reasonable to expect increasing similarity between male and female behavior, even in delinquent behavior" (Thompson & Lozes, 1976: 5). Freda Adler (1975) made a more explicit causal link between girls' violence/gang involvement and the Women's Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. She argued, similar to many of the print media claimants, that the amount of girls' violence and gang involvement was increasing, and that their greater sense of empowerment was the cause:

> Passivity is no longer a self-evident feminine virtue, and status is not automatically conferred on the girl who is docile and chaste. Since delinquent activity, like its adult counterpart, is linked to opportunity and expectation, there is every reason to anticipate that, as egalitarian forces expand, so too will the crime rate of the female young set (Adler, 1975: 94).

Miller (1973) argued against the application of the Women's Movement as a cause for girls' violence and gang involvement. In his study of the female auxiliary gang, the Molls, he argued that the girls' gang membership and lifestyle was a "product of the subcultures to which these girls belong - particularly those of females, adolescents, urban dwellers and lower status persons" (Miller, 1973: 247), and that their dependency on the male gang members showed no consideration of or desire for women's emancipation. Furthermore, Giordano (1978) also denied a relationship between women's emancipation and girls' violence and gang involvement. In a study comparing delinquent and non-delinquent girls, Giordano claimed that neither the girls' personal maladjustment nor women's liberation accounted for girls' delinquent behaviour, but that it was their relationships with same sex delinquent peers which led to delinquency. She argued that:

> ...it was found that for both subsamples the perception of approval from other girlfriends was significantly correlated with actual delinquency involvement. This suggests what may be a crucial element of change. While it is unlikely that girls are or will become immune to what the boys think of their behavior, it is likely that other girls are the most important reference group, or at least the group to which they compare themselves (Giordano, 1978: 132).

Typifying Examples: None of the social scientists in the 1970s sample used grabbers or very many examples to typify the problem. Three of the five did however present excerpts from interviews with female gang members, or provided examples of the kinds of offences the girls would commit which served to personalize the problem. Brown (1977) described one particular all female gang in Philadelphia called the "Holly Ho's". He stated that this female gang was deeply involved in the subculture of violence, and that fighting was used as a means of gaining

status and having fun. He compared the girls to Amazons because they appeared to be fearless, aggressive and would fight both women and men:

> Reputed to enjoy fighting, they have been accused of knifing and kicking pregnant females and especially enjoying badly scarring and mutilating "cute" girls. Their arsenal is said to contain knives, hand guns, rifles and sawed off shotguns. "Getting a body" (killing) is also said to be an important part of their "rep". Like the black male gangs of Philadelphia, the "Holly Ho's" are a violent gang that function in a milieu where aggression has become a symbolic means for establishing an identity (Brown, 1977: 227).

Adler (1975) also provided an example of the brutality and violence of which some female gang members are capable. She described the behaviour of female gangs called the "bovver birds" which were terrifying the streets of London in the 1970s for the thrill of it:

> ...they swoop down in groups on unsuspecting victims in dark streets, at lonely bus stops, and in deserted toilets, kicking, biting, scratching, punching, they reduce the victim - usually another female - to hysteria and then disappear, stealing perhaps only a few pence...(*Time* article cited in Adler, 1975: 100).

Miller's (1973) study was a case study, thus he provided several examples of the types offences the girls in the "Molls" would engage in. These offences included truancy, theft, drinking, vandalism, sex offences and assault. Occasionally they would engage in behaviour that did not fall into these categories, such as killing neighbourhood cats (Miller, 1973: 243). All of these examples seemed to be included by the authors, not to typify a dangerous and growing social problem, but to show the kind of violence and serious offences girls in gangs were occasionally capable of, as well as to show what kind of behaviour could be involved with girl gang life.

Numeric Estimates: Adler (1975) and Thompson and Lozes (1976) both provided official statistics and growth estimates which supported their claim that the amount of girls' violence and gang involvement was increasing:

> Girls are involved in more drinking, stealing, gang activity, and fighting - behavior in keeping with their adoption of male roles. We also find increases in the total number of female deviancies. The departure from the safety of traditional female roles and the testing of uncertain alternative roles coincide with the turmoil of adolescence creating criminogenic risk factors which are bound to create this increase. These considerations help explain the fact that between

> 1960 and 1972 national arrests for major crimes show a jump for boys of 82 per cent - for girls, 306 per cent (Adler, 1975: 95).
>
> Arrest data for Prince George's County youth under 18 years of age between 1967 and 1974 show that female crime is on the increase. In 1967 males were responsible for 91.39% of all juvenile crimes reported, females for only 8.6%. In 1970 and 1974 males were responsible for 86.40% and 82.51% respectively; whereas females contributed 13.59% and 17.48% to overall crimes reported in 1970 and 1974 (Thompson & Lozes, 1976: 2).

Giordano (1978) also made reference to statistics which showed that there was an 'increase' in the number of females and in the versatility of their involvement in crime. However, the focus of her study, as well as the foci of the studies of Miller (1973) and Brown (1977), was not to address an increase in girls' violence or gang involvement but to study the nature and causes of their involvement.

Range Claims: Adler (1975) was the only social scientist in the sample who explicitly addressed the range of the phenomenon; she claimed that female delinquents and gang members tended to be from lower class backgrounds.

WARRANTS

Associated Evils: All of the five social scientists in the sample from the 1970s associated girls' violence and gang involvement with the incidence of serious, typically masculine offences such as assault, theft, breaking and entering, drug and alcohol abuse and weapons use. One claimant argued that:

> Alcohol, amphetamines, and heroin have replaced marijuana and LSD; commercial sex has replaced Aquarian love; and a street-wise group of emotionally distressed, violence-prone youngsters roam the areas where idealistic flower children once trod (Adler, 1975: 95).

Three of them discussed how girls in gangs would provide sexual opportunities for the male members, and argued that the girls were very dependent or controlled by the male members and frequently deferred to them: "The evidence is clear that the Molls and other young women like

them not only did not resent the fact that their status was directly dependent on that of the boys, but actively sought this condition and gloried in it" (Miller, 1973: 248). The social scientists in the 1970s sample did not exactly represent all of these factors as evil, but portrayed them as conditions which were linked to this form of deviant behaviour.

Historical Continuity: Two of the five social scientists in the 1970s sample noted that traditional delinquency theory had rarely or inaccurately addressed the incidence of female involvement in violence or gangs: "Subcultural delinquency among females has suffered from a paucity of reportage when compared to the plethora of extant accounts concerned with male delinquency" (Brown, 1977: 221); and

> The bulk of literature, then, has perpetuated the notion that personal maladjustments characterize the female delinquent...The recent large increases in both the number of adjudicated females and the apparent increased versatility of their involvement in crimes, make it far more difficult to account for all female crime in such a purely psychological terms (Giordano, 1978: 126).

They argued that the break from traditional female delinquency, which 'increased' amounts and 'different' types of female delinquencies marked, brought with it another break from tradition - more investigation into the nature of these new female delinquencies and the abandonment of traditional theoretical explanations for the phenomenon.

Summary:

In the 1970s portion of the social science sample, the grounds statements included causal links, examples of violence, and some statistics which indicated an increase. The social scientists attributed girls' violence and gang involvement to a range of factors including personal maladjustment, the Women's Movement, social subcultures to which girls belonged, and associations with same sex delinquent peers. The few typifying examples which were provided in particular sources outlined the kinds of violence and brutality that girls in gangs were capable of, and these examples were supported with statistics which showed that girls were increasingly

involved in violence and/or gangs. The warrant statements associated girls' violence and gang involvement with the incidence of serious, masculine offences, sexual activity and a dependence on male gang members. Furthermore, many of the social scientists argued that an 'increase' in girls' violence brought with it a greater amount of innovative, expert interest in the phenomenon.

2.3 Claims Made by Social Scientists in the 1980s:

GROUNDS

Definition: While the social scientists in the 1980s sample focused on different aspects of girls' violence and gang involvement, four out of the five in the sample argued that female delinquency and gang membership, as well as that of males, was caused by social structural imbalance involving racism, sexism, poverty and limited opportunity structures. They commonly claimed that: "As with males, gang membership and violent offenses seem to be correlated with a background of poverty and, consequently, minority status" (Campbell, 1987: 41); "They [Latino girls in gangs] are socially, economically and racially caught in a social world that does not provide ready or easy access to dominant institutions" (Harris, 1988: 166); and "These changes [more violent/masculine crime] in the content of the black female gang appear not to be related to the women's liberation movement but to forced 'emancipation' which stems from the economic crisis within the black community" (Fishman, 1988: 91). Harris (1988: 191) further specified some factors which predisposed Latino girls for entry into the delinquent gang and which were connected with the communities in which they lived. She argued that girls joined the gang to fill identity, status, cohesion and esteem needs that could not be fulfilled within their dispossessed communities due to a lack of opportunities. Harris also claimed that girls joined gangs to make friends and learn skills which would protect them from violence and abuse in the home and the neighbourhood.

None of the five social scientists in the 1980s sample defined the problem of girls' violence and gang involvement as a 'rapidly increasing' one which was cause for concern. In fact, Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier (1980: 62) asserted that "studies of juvenile gangs show no increase in female violence or gang-related delinquencies while self-report data show that, with the exception of marijuana use and drinking, female delinquency has remained generally stable over the past decade".

Typifying Examples: Not many of the social scientists in this sample provided examples which typified the problem of girls' violence and gang involvement. Three out of five of them were conducting quantitative studies of the types of offences female delinquents could be expected to commit, as well as the situations in which they would commit them, and thus did not investigate the details of individual female delinquents' lives. Fishman (1988) and Harris (1988) both conducted ethnographic studies of female gangs and thus included quotes from or narratives about girl gang members concerning the nature of their membership. These quotes personalize the problem as they speak of the kinds of things that go on in gang life in dispossessed communities:

> Gata is walking through the mall in San Fernando. It's late - too late. She's alone and she's in enemy territory. She's a little high and she's feeling hesitant, wary. "But I'm tough", she thinks to herself. "If they want to attack me, let them. I can take care of myself." She takes her knife out, ready (Harris, 1988: 102-3).

> The Vice Queens tend to accept the boys fondling them constantly, pulling on them and beating them up. In fact, one boy entered the worker's car, dragged one of the girls out and proceeded to beat her up. This girl was not going with the boy at the time and had never expressed interest in the boy. After this incident, as she was rubbing her puffed up lips, she stated that he "sure was cute" (Observer's report cited in Fishman, 1988: 88).

Numeric Estimates: Aside from those social scientists who presented statistics or numeric results from their own studies, only a few in the sample provided examples of official statistics. The two social scientists that did, used these statistics to show that amounts of girls' violence and gang involvement were only increasing slightly, but not rapidly. Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier

(1980: 76) argued that: "...whatever gains females have made since 1965 are due largely to increases in court referrals of females for shoplifting, marijuana and drug use, and for status offences such as running away or violating curfew". Campbell (1987) included official statistics in her study in order to show that, contrary to popular concern, there was no great increase in female aggression:

> Between 1970 and 1979, the Uniform Crime Reports indicated that the percentage increase for juvenile females' involvement in aggravated assault was 75%; in weapon possession was, 107% and for nonindex, 50.9%. The rate of increase was substantially larger than that of boys, yet if we consider all those charged with the above offenses, the percentages of females are a modest 15%, 6% and 21% respectively (Campbell, 1987: 140).

She concluded that it was inaccurate to assume, based on these official statistics, that female criminal aggression had "reached alarming proportions" (Campbell, 1987: 140).

The only growth estimate concerning the incidence of girls' violence and gang involvement in this sample was made by Fishman (1988: 91), who claimed that "in response to the economic crisis within their communities, black female gangs today have become more entrenched, more violent and more oriented to 'male' crime".

Range Claims: There were no explicit range claims found in the 1980s sample but many of the social scientists implicitly referred to the context of girls' violence and gang involvement by discussing this behaviour amongst girls of ethnic minority, lower-class backgrounds.

WARRANTS

Associated Evils: Other than Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier (1980), who argued that female delinquency was associated with the commission of shoplifting and status offences, all of the other social scientists in this sample identified female delinquency as being associated with serious delinquency. Four of the five social scientists in the 1980s sample asserted that female gang members were frequently involved in 'masculine' fights, which involved knives, kicking and punching. The girls fought in response to attacks on their integrity or over boyfriends (Campbell,

1987). They were involved in prostitution, provided sexual opportunities for the male members, and were involved in heavy drug use (Harris, 1988). The girls were frequently beaten by the male members, and violence was seen as the norm in the gang as it brought status and respect (Campbell, 1987; Harris, 1988). Three of these social scientists argued that all of this behaviour was typical of gang life in dispossessed communities and that the gang helped the girls to cope with this environment: "...[the gangs] provide these girls with the opportunity to learn skills to make adaptations to poverty, violence and racism" (Fishman, 1988: 91); "They [Latino girls] are in-between, isolated within the barrio context where gangs, drugs and barrio warfare are a way of life. Faced with uncertainty and conflict, they search for stability within the gang" (Harris, 1998: 166). The social scientists also emphasized that the girls who were involved in gangs rarely finished high school, often got pregnant at a young age, and were controlled and abused by the male members of the gangs (Harris, 1988; Fishman, 1988; Campbell; 1987; Bowker & Klein, 1983).

Summary:

The five social scientists in the 1980s sample did define the problem of girls' violence and gang involvement as 'increasing' in general, but did recognize 'increases' were occurring in certain communities though not at a rapid rate. They argued that this social problem was due to social structural imbalance and a lack of opportunities for youth. Typifying examples primarily appeared in ethnographic studies and consisted of narratives about individual girls' experiences in the gang. The few numeric estimates that were included in the sources were used to support the claim that there was no increase occurring in the incidence of girls' violence and/or gang involvement. Moreover, certain claimants argued that masculine fights and violence, prostitution, drug use, sexual promiscuity, physical and sexual abuse by male members, high incidences of high school drop-out, and unplanned pregnancies were commonly associated with female involvement in gang life.

2.4 Claims Made by Social Scientists in the 1990s:

GROUNDS

Definition: Similar to the claimants in the 1980s sample, six out of the seven social scientists in the 1990s sample argued that the causes for girls' violence and gang involvement could be found in social structural imbalance and a lack of opportunities. They argued that because the communities they lived in offered them little, ethnic minority girls often joined gangs because they provided support, companionship, safety, a sense of family and fun. Five out of the seven social scientists in the sample claimed that "the gang provides for its members an idealized collective solution to the bleak future that awaits" (Campbell, 1990: 173); "girls' gang life is certainly not an expression of 'liberation', but instead reflects the attempts of young women to cope with a bleak and harsh present as well as a dismal future" (Chesney-Lind et al., 1996: 203); and "Owing to their position in gender, race and class divisions of labor and power, many young, marginalized girls of color form or join violent street gangs" (Messerschmidt, 1997: 85).

Five out of the seven expert claimants emphasized that many of the girls in the gangs had experienced physical and sexual abuse or violence in the home, more so than non-delinquent girls. They argued that the violence the girls used was in reaction to violence perpetrated against them. Only one of the seven social scientists in this sample defined girls' violence and/or gang involvement as an increasing problem, but they all seem to have justified the violence perpetrated by girl gang members by emphasizing their poor social, economic, and/or familial situations: "For girls, fighting and violence is part of their life in the gang, but not something they necessarily seek out" (Chesney-Lind et al., 1996: 202); "many of the impulses that propel youth into gangs are prosocial and understandable: the need for safety, security and a sense of purpose and belonging" (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996: 176).

Typifying Examples: Several of the social scientists were either conducting ethnographic studies or drew heavily from ethnographies on the lives of girl gang members or violent girls. Five of the

seven provided quotes from gang members describing the role girls would play in the gang, and the role the gang or violence played in the girls' lives. Typical quotes dealt with such issues as fighting, boredom, experiences of sexual and physical abuse, sexual relationships with male gang members, or the sense of belonging and protection the girls received from the gang:

> ...after school everybody would meet at Brother Brian's Bar, drink, dance, talk story, then when sun was going down that's when all the drug dealing started. And then [later] couple times we would go out and look for trouble. Some of us felt hyped and would go out and beat up people. We went up to this park and had this one couple, and so for nothing we just went beat'em up (interview cited in Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996: 169).

> I don't trust anybody else, that's why. They're the only ones I can depend on, 'cause I know if I get into hassles, they'll help me. Like one time we went to B___. We used to go to hang around there, and some girls there were going to jump me, and all the girls I was with took off and they left me there alone. That's when I said I was only going to hang around with my homegirls (interview excerpt from Quicker, 1983 cited in Campbell, 1990: 176).

> One girl simply states that she belongs to the gang to provide "some protection from her father". Through the group she has learned ways to defend herself physically and emotionally. "He used to beat me up, but now I hit back and he doesn't beat me much now" (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996: 174).

Such examples were included by the social scientists to inform as to the prevalence of violence and a lack of opportunities for girls existent in dispossessed communities, which predisposed them to entry into the gang.

Numeric Estimates: The social scientists in the 1990s sample provided statistics and growth estimates to support a variety of claims. Campbell (1990: 182) presented statistics which reflected the bleakness of the futures of many of the girls involved in the gangs she studied: "94% will go on to have children, and 84% will raise them without spouses. One-third of them will be arrested, and the vast majority will be dependent on welfare". Messerschmidt (1997: 77) included growth estimates which claimed that "young lower working-class girls of color, in particular, African American girls, commit interpersonal crimes of violence at a much higher rate than do other girls".

Both Bjerregaard and Smith (1993) and Artz (1998) argued that the problem of girls' violence and/or gang involvement was increasing, and included statistics or growth estimates which reflected this claim. Bjerregaard and Smith (1993: 94) argued that "estimates based on recent observational and self-report studies suggest that the proportion of gang members who are female ranges from 10 to 13% and is greater than official data indicate...self-report research suggests that female gang membership may be increasing...". Artz (1998; v) also claimed that research had found that girls were more involved in assault and weapons use both individually and in gangs.

In contrast, Chesney-Lind et al. (1996) and Pate (1997) discussed how the interpretation of official statistics by the media can be misleading with regards to the extent of girls' violence and gang involvement. Chesney-Lind et al. (1996; 189) claimed that FBI statistics showed that it was not just girls' criminal behaviour that was changing, but that overall changes in youth behaviour were occurring. Furthermore, they asserted that a small proportion of girls' crime was serious and that "only 2.3% of girls' arrests in 1984 were for serious crimes. By 1993, this figure rose to 3.4% (14,788 arrests out of a total of 426,980 arrests)" (Chesney-Lind et al., 1996: 191). Pate (1997: 29) pointed out that the 200% increase in robbery offences among young girls in the last decade quoted to her by a reporter really amounted to two new cases of robbery committed by young girls within the last two years. She argued that while this statistic was correct, "the impression created by the 200 percent figure and the accompanying media hype, however, created an incredibly skewed and inaccurate picture of young women suddenly erupting into violent behaviour" (Pate, 1997: 29).

Pate (1997: 29) claimed that recent 'increases' in the amount of girls' violence and aggressive behaviour could be explained by the introduction of zero tolerance policies. These policies result in more charges for girls for offences that were once considered to be minor, and she maintained that "proportionately, because the overall number of young women charged with violent offences remains relatively low, the increased numbers create more substantial percentage

increases in the statistics for girls than they do for boys" (Pate, 1997; 29). Pate (1997), Chesney-Lind et al. (1996), and Joe and Chesney-Lind (1996) all argued that the media are to blame for the inaccurate perception that girls' violence and gang involvement are increasing, as they sensationalize both the nature and volume of female violence. They claimed that: "as young women are demonized by the media, their genuine problems can be marginalized and then ignored" (Joe & Chesney-Lind; 1996: 177); "...media portrayals seem to suggest that girls engaged in what are defined as 'male' activities such as violent crime or gang delinquency are seen as seeking 'equality' with their male counterparts ...Clearly, the research in girls and gangs indicates even this explanation is far too simplistic" (Chesney-Lind et al., 1996: 204); and " ...every time one such incident [of girl violence] occurs, journalists and talk show hosts beat the bushes for other examples to support extreme interpretations of the event" (Pate, 1997: 31).

Three of the seven social scientists also made claims to indicate that girls' violence was not out of control, such as "serious crimes of violence represent a very small proportion of all girls' delinquency, and that figure has remained essentially unchanged" (Chesney-Lind et al., 1996: 189); "while girls commit more crime and engage in more fights than their stereotype would support, they are certainly less involved in this behaviour than the boys" (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996: 172); or "compared to female gang members, male gang members are more likely to engage in serious delinquency and alcohol use but not in other forms of delinquency or substance use" (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993: 99).

Range Claims: Three of the seven expert claimants in the 1990s sample identified lower-class, minority girls as disproportionately involved in gangs and violence. They claimed that: "...gang has become a code word for race in the United States" (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996: 156); and "...in relation to middle-class white people, gang girls are lower-working-class girls of color..." (Messerschmidt, 1997; 81). However, Artz (1998) argued that:

> ...the handful of studies that do exist focus on Afro-American or Hispanic-American girls who are marginalized because of color or ethnicity, live in ghettos, and are either members of known youth gangs or heavily involved in the juvenile justice system. The violent, non-gang, white girls and the violent white school girl who is not in juvenile detention have been virtually ignored. It is as if such girls do not exist - but in fact they do... (Artz, 1998: vi).

Thus, several of the social scientists in this sample identified that this problem occurs in neighbourhoods populated with people of ethnic minority and lower-class backgrounds.

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Associated Evils: The social scientists argued that girls' violence and gang involvement were commonly associated with the incidence of fights, weapons use (especially knives), drug and alcohol abuse, promiscuity, school failure, prostitution, and other status offences. They asserted that the fights (either fist or knife) between girls or gangs of girls were usually sparked by rumours, sexual rivalry or encroachment on gang territory (Campbell, 1990; Chesney-Lind et al., 1996; Messerschmidt, 1997), and that the ability to engage in aggressive behaviour granted the girl gang member respect and status (Messerschmidt, 1997). Two of the seven social scientists in the 1990s sample claimed that the girls in the gang were frequently beaten, abused or controlled by the male gang members (Messerschmidt, 1997; Campbell, 1990).

Historical Continuity: Four of the social scientists maintained that girls' violence and gang involvement marked no break from traditional female delinquency, as they argued that girls' had been involved in gangs and gang violence for decades. Some made this claim directly: "Girls have been a part of gangs since the earliest accounts from New York in the early 1800s" (Campbell, 1990: 166). While others made the claim implicitly and pointed to the longevity of the phenomenon by arguing that it existed but had traditionally been ignored by researchers and law enforcement agencies: "During earlier periods, however, this occasional violence was ignored by law enforcement officers, who were far more concerned with girls' sexual behavior or morality" (Chesney-Lind et al., 1996: 203); and "Departures for what is considered 'appropriate

female crime' are either ignored - indeed, there is a dearth of theorizing about female violence in criminological theory - or are deviantized as inappropriate at best, 'masculine' at worst (Messerschmidt, 1997: 68).

Summary:

The majority of the expert claimants in the 1990s sample defined the causes of girls' violence and gang involvement to be social structural imbalance and a lack of opportunities. They also specified that the gang appealed to some girls because it fulfilled needs for support, companionship, safety, protection from sexual and physical abuse, fun and a sense of family. Typifying examples were provided only in the ethnographic sources and dealt with the role the girls played in the gang, as well as the role the gang played in the lives of the girls. Numeric and growth estimates varied as some included assessments of an increase in incidence, while others discussed the extent to which the media misinterpret statistics and exaggerate an increase in violent offences by girls. The majority of the range claims identified the females involved in violence and gang involvement as members of lower-class, ethnic minorities, with the exception of Artz (1998) who studied the behaviour of non-ethnic, violent school girls. The social scientists found that fights, weapons, drugs and alcohol, promiscuity, school failure, status offences, sexual and physical abuse, and media distortions were some negative factors which were associated with girls' violence and gang involvement. They also argued that the nature of this issue was not a break with traditional female delinquency as girls' had been involved in gangs and violence to some extent for a long time. It is clear that whichever causes or factors the social scientists in the total sample associated with girls' violence and gang involvement, the majority of those in the 1980s and 1990s samples tended to explain the existence of female violence by emphasizing that this behaviour was a response to social forces beyond the girls' perceived control.

3. PROMINENT IMAGES FOUND IN PRINT MEDIA AND SOCIAL SCIENCE LITERATURE ON GIRLS' VIOLENCE AND GANG INVOLVEMENT:

Examinations of print media and social science literature from the 1970s to the 1990s which address girls' violence and gang involvement revealed various recurring images or representations of the nature of female delinquency. The majority of the print media and expert claimants in the samples seem to have addressed the same issues and causes of girls' violence and gang involvement, but have represented them in different ways. Throughout the literature analyzed in this study, I noted the identification of seven common images of female delinquents by both claims-making groups. The majority of the print media and expert claimants identified and described the female delinquent in their literature as: 1) the violent or seriously offending female delinquent (gang or non-gang member); 2) the sexually competitive female delinquent; 3) the maladjusted female delinquent; 4) the lower-class, ethnic minority female gang member; 5) the sexually/physically abused female delinquent from a broken home; 6) the liberated female delinquent; 7) and the misrepresented or demonized female delinquent. These images are not to be considered as mutually exclusive, as the claimants described violent girl gang members as simultaneously possessing several of the characteristics associated with the images. Some of these images are presented more frequently in the literature of one claims-making group than another, and each group seems to shape and represent the image in a different manner. Now I will discuss the ways in which some of the social scientists' and print journalists' representations of these images of female delinquency were similar and others different.

The violent/seriously offending female delinquent:

All of the claimants in the samples depicted the female delinquent as capable of violent behaviour, whether a gang member or not. This image refers to girls as being the perpetrators of violent or serious crimes such as assault, armed robbery, theft, manslaughter and murder. While they all discussed violent offences perpetrated by girls, the print media claimants and the expert

claimants differed in the way they represented this image. Almost all of the print journalists argued that the amount of girls' violence was rapidly increasing, and as a result shaped this phenomenon as a new and dangerous social problem. They also presented the perpetrators as a new breed of amoral girls who had become meaner and more violent (*CH* Oct.21, 1995: B9; *TS* Dec.9, 1997: C3). While some of the expert claimants in the social science literature also argued that girls' violence and gang involvement was increasing, the majority of them argued that this phenomenon was not out of control. They also frequently rationalized the incidence of violence perpetrated by girls, as they argued that the violence used by girls was often a reaction to negative conditions in their environment (Harris, 1988; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996; Campbell, 1990).

The sexually competitive female delinquent:

This image depicts female delinquents as engaging in violence due to sexual rivalry or threats to their romantic relationships. The print journalists in the sample argued that due to messages in the media and popular culture which instructed girls that they needed to be attractive in order to find self-worth in a relationship with a boy, girls were becoming more competitive and were fighting with other girls over boys (*TS* Dec. 9, 1997: C3; *G&M* Nov.29, 1997: D3). This image of the female delinquent appeared much less in the social science literature than in the print media claims. Social scientists isolated this sexual rivalry as occurring mostly amongst female gang members, and not among girls in general (Campbell, 1987; Fishman, 1988; Harris, 1988). They argued that girl gang members would fight over boys if one girl moved in on another's boyfriend. Many social scientists discussed the dynamics of this rivalry. They mentioned that despite the fact that the boyfriend had cheated on the girlfriend, the girlfriend would always punish the girl he cheated with instead of punishing the boyfriend. The social scientists noted that this was the standard practice because male promiscuity was allowed and viewed as a norm in the gang subculture (Campbell, 1987; Harris, 1988).

The maladjusted female delinquent:

The image of the maladjusted female delinquent argues that girls commit violence or engage in gangs due to personal inadequacies or psychological problems. According to the print media and expert claimants in the sample, this maladjustment could manifest itself in the form of promiscuity, amorality, poor social skills, low self-esteem and poor relations with parents and peers (Brown, 1977; *TS* Dec.9, 1997: C3; *CH* Feb.16, 1996: B5). More print media claimants argued that girls' personal maladjustment was a cause for girls' violence and gang involvement than did social scientists.

The lower-class, ethnic minority girl gang member:

This image depicts the girl gang member as typically coming from a lower class, ethnic minority background. This image, predominantly discussed by the expert claimants in the study sample, was usually accompanied by claims which explained girl gang involvement and violence as due to a lack of opportunities, sexism, racism and poverty in certain communities. Girls were seen as being forced to join gangs and engage in violence in order to survive in their dispossessed neighbourhoods, and because the gang offered them the opportunities to gain support, occasionally earn money, and have fun (Campbell, 1990; Harris, 1988; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996).

The sexually/physically abused female delinquent from a broken home:

This image regards the female delinquent as more often victimized by physical and sexual abuse or violence in the home than non-delinquent girls. The anger and shame the girls feel as a result of their victimization is believed to cause them to lash out violently at others in an attempt to feel powerful and gain control over their lives (Artz, 1998). Both print media and expert claimants argued that histories of abuse were associated with girls' violence and gang involvement, but they represented the image differently. Many of the print journalists simply stated that there was violence in the home lives of the violent girls, or that they came from

dysfunctional or broken homes, and did not necessarily address the possibility or impact of sexual or physical abuse in the girls' lives (*CH* Oct.21, 1995: B9; *TS* Dec.10, 1997: C1). Many of the expert claimants explored this aspect and argued that there were histories of physical or sexual abuse in the lives of the delinquent girls, stated whether the abuse took place in the home or outside of it, and many provided statistics showing the widespread occurrence of this victimization amongst delinquent girls (Chesney-Lind et. al, 1996; Messerschmidt, 1997; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996; Artz, 1998; Campbell, 1990).

The liberated female delinquent:

This image refers to female delinquents as engaging in delinquency or violence in a conscious attempt to gain equality with their male counterparts. More print journalists argued that women's emancipation was a cause for increased amounts of girls' violence and gang involvement than did social scientists (*MG* Nov.15, 1979: 41; *G&M* Nov.29, 1997: D3). Many social scientists openly disputed the application of the Women's Movement as a cause for girls' violence and gang involvement [with the exception of Adler (1975)]. They argued that the girls were not acting violently in a conscious effort to be considered as equal to or achieve the same opportunities as delinquent or non-delinquent boys, but in an effort to survive in their violent, dispossessed communities (Fishman, 1988; Miller, 1973; Chesney-Lind et al., 1996).

The misrepresented female delinquent:

This image argues that the media and statistics distort or misrepresent the levels of violence in which female delinquents engage. It also argues that the amount of girls' violence was distorted by zero tolerance policies, which had redefined as serious several offences that had previously been considered as minor. This image appeared in the social scientists' claims more than it did in the print media claims (Pate, 1997; Chesney-Lind et al., 1996; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996). When such claims did appear in the print media literature, they were quotes provided by social scientists (*TS* Dec. 9, 1997: C3; *TS* Aug.12, 1995: C4).

I will now discuss the manifest content analysis I conducted on the print media and social science samples. This analysis will indicate which of the images were most popular with which claims-making group, and will also include a section which illustrates that there has been a great increase in attention to the topic of girls' violence and gang involvement in recent years.

4. MANIFEST CONTENT ANALYSIS:

Manifest content analysis involves a quantitative measure of the surface structure present in a communication or communications, and includes the physical counting of certain elements (Singleton Jr., Straits & Straits, 1993). In this study, the number of times each of the seven images found in the print media and social science literature appeared in the documents of each group was counted in order to determine the popularity of each image per claims-making group.

4.1 Popularity of Images of the Female Delinquent per Claims-Making Group:

In a sample of seventeen social science sources, fifteen of the expert claimants referred to the image of the violent/seriously offending female delinquent. Twenty-eight print media documents out of thirty referred to this image but argued that girls' were becoming more violent. Only two expert sources referred to the image of the maladjusted female delinquent, while eight print media claimants mentioned this image. Eleven out of seventeen social science sources discussed the poor, ethnic minority status of female delinquents, whereas only three out of thirty print media claimants referred to this image. Only two expert claimants referred to female delinquents as liberated, while twelve out of thirty print journalists argued that increases in female delinquency were due to the Women's Movement. Nine social science sources out of the seventeen discussed the backgrounds of physical/sexual abuse and violence delinquent girls had experienced either in the home or the neighbourhood, whereas thirteen out of thirty print media claimants depicted this image. Three out of seventeen social science sources described the sexually competitive female delinquent, while this image featured more prominently in the print

media sources as ten out of thirty claimants mentioned this image. Finally, five out of seventeen social science sources referred to the image of the misrepresented female delinquent, whereas only four out of thirty print journalists argued that the nature of female delinquency had been misrepresented in some way (see Table 2 for percentages).

TABLE 2. MANIFEST CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS -
The Popularity of Female Delinquency Images per Claims-Making Group Over Time

	SOCIAL SCIENCE	CANADIAN PRINT JOURNALISTS
Violence	15 (88%)	28 (97%)
Personal Maladjustment	2 (12%)	8 (27%)
Poor, Ethnic Minority	11 (65%)	3 (10%)
Physical & Sexual Abuse/Broken Home	9 (55%)	13 (43%)
Sexually Competitive	3 (18%)	10 (33%)
Misrepresented	5 (29%)	4 (13%)
Liberated	2 (12%)	12 (40%)
Total Sample	**17**	**30**

While these findings are not statistically significant, it appears that the images concerning the nature and causes of female delinquency which featured more prominently in the print journalists sample, compared to the social science sources, were: the increasingly violent female delinquent; the maladjusted female delinquent; the liberated female delinquent; and the sexually competitive female delinquent. Those images which were more frequently presented by the social scientists included: the violent/seriously offending female delinquent; the poor, ethnic minority female gang member; the physically/sexually abused female delinquent; and the misrepresented female delinquent. It seems, that despite the fact that both groups find female delinquents today to be capable of violent behaviour, each represents the nature and causes of girls' violence and gang involvement in different ways.

4.2 The Frequency With Which Claims Appear per Claims-Making Group:

Best (1990: 65) argued that "the realities of the social problems marketplace give claims-makers several reasons for reconstructing problems". Best stated that once a social problem becomes established, media coverage tends to decline. He noted further fluctuating patterns of coverage of social problems, in that claims-makers enjoy generating new claims to keep social problems fresh, newsworthy and in the minds of the public. In order to determine the patterns involved with the coverage of the social problem of girls' violence and gang involvement, I counted the number of Canadian newspaper/magazine articles and social science sources which were published over the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. While conducting the manual searches of the Canadian news indexes, I counted the approximate number of Canadian newspaper and magazine articles concerning girls' violence and/or gang involvement: two appeared between 1970 to 1979; three addressed this issue between 1980 to 1989; and fifty newspaper and magazine articles appeared from 1990 to April, 1998 (see Table 3).

TABLE 3. MANIFEST CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS - The Number of Canadian Newspaper/Magazine Articles Published in the 1970s, 1980s, & 1990s

	CANADIAN NEWSPAPER/MAGAZINE ARTICLES	Total # of Articles
1970-1979	*Winnipeg Free Press*. May 16. 1979.p.51 *Montreal Gazette*. Nov.15. 1979. p.41	2
1980-1989	*Winnipeg Free Press*. Jan.31. 1980. p.1 *Winnipeg Free Press*. Jan.6. 1984. p.3 *Montreal Gazette*. May 29. 1988. p.B7	3
1990-April 1998	*Montreal Gazette*. Feb.12. 1990. p.F1-2 *Vancouver Sun*. Nov.26. 1991. p.A1. A20 *Winnipeg Free Press*. May 29. 1992. p.A20 *Calgary Herald*. May 29. 1992. p.B1 *Globe&Mail*. May 29. 1992. p.A9 *Calgary Herald*. July 23. 1992. p.C2 *Western Report*. Nov.15. 1993. p.27 *Western Report*. Dec.26. 1994. p.23 *Globe&Mail*. Dec.14. 1994. p.A14 *BC Report*. Sept.19. 1994. p.36 *Globe& Mail*. July 15. 1995. p.C4 *Calgary Herald*. Sept.14. 1995. p.B8 *Toronto Star*. Aug.12. 1995. p.C4 *Winnipeg Free Press*. Oct.10. 1995. p.A1. A2 *Calgary Herald*. Dec.1. 1995. p.B8 *Globe& Mail*. Sept.12. 1995. p.A10 *Halifax Chronicle Herald*. Sept.23. 1995. p.C2 *Calgary Herald*. Oct.21. 1995. p.B9 *Calgary Herald*. Feb.16. 1996. B1 *Vancouver Sun*. May 21. 1996. p.B6 *Toronto Star*. Dec.10. 1996. C1-2 *Calgary Herald*. Nov.23. 1996. p.B1-2 *Montreal Gazette*. Jan.5. 1997. p.A6 *BC Report*. Feb.24. 1997. p.32 *Montreal Gazette*. May 10. 1997. p.A6 *BC Report*. Aug.25. 1997. p.34 *Montreal Gazette*. Oct.27. 1997. p.E5 *Vancouver Sun*. Nov.25. 1997. p.A1. A8 *Globe&Mail*. Nov.28. 1997. p.A2 *Globe&Mail*. Nov.29. 1997. p.D3 *Globe&Mail*. Nov.29.1997. p.A1.A10 *Toronto Star*. Nov.28. 1997. p.A2 *Toronto Sun*. Nov.30. 1997. p.40-41 *Toronto Star*. Dec.6. 1997. p.E1. E4 *Vancouver Sun*. Dec.1. 1997. p.A1 *Toronto Star*.Dec.7. 1997 *Maclean's*. Dec.8. 1997. p.12 *Toronto Star*. Dec.9. 1997. p.C3 *Globe&Mail*. Jan.22. 1998. p.A12 *Alberta Report*. Jan.19. 1998.p.26-27 *Globe&Mail*. Jan.31. 1998. p.A14 *Globe&Mail*. Jan.20. 1998. p.A1. A5 *Toronto Star*. Jan.22. 1998. p.A1. A2 *Montreal Gazette*. Feb.7. 1998. p.B6 *Ottawa Sun*. March 5. 1998. p.32 *BC Report*. March 30. 1998. p.28 *Chatelaine*. March 1998. p.70-77 *Herizons*. Spring 1998. p.14 *This Magazine*. March/April 1998. p.30-35 *Toronto Star*. April. 7. 1998. p.A22	50

Based on the snowball sampling technique used to gather relevant social science sources, a similar increase in coverage was also noted in the social science community. From 1970 to 1979, approximately thirteen social science articles and books were published addressing girls' violence and/or gang involvement. From 1980 to 1989, the number increased to twenty-one social science articles and books. This number further increased from 1990 to 1998, in that fifty-three social science articles and books were published concerning this issue (see Table 4).

TABLE 4. MANIFEST CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS - The Number of Social Science Sources Published in the 1970s, 1980s & 1990s

	SOCIAL SCIENCE ARTICLES/BOOKS	Total # of Articles/Books
1970-1979	Hindelang, 1971 Klein, Shimota & Luce, 1971 Miller, 1973 Rosenblatt & Greenland, 1974 Adler, 1975 Thompson & Lozes, 1976 McRobbie & Gerber, 1976 Brown, 1977 Shacklady Smith, 1978 Bowker, 1978 Giordano, 1978 Balkan & Berger, 1979 Steffensmeier & Steffensmeier, 1979	13
1980-1989	Bowker, Gross & Klein, 1980 Steffensmeier & Steffensmeier, 1980 Campbell, 1981 Gagnon, Langelier-Biron, 1982 Gora, 1982 Ageton, 1983 Bowker & Klein, 1983 Collette-Carriere & Langelier-Biron, 1983 Horowitz, 1983 Quicker, 1983 Campbell, 1984a Campbell, 1984b Mann, 1984 Campbell, 1986 Savard & Langelier-Biron, 1986 Campbell, 1987 Fishman, 1988 Harris, 1988 Arras & Johnson, 1989 Berger, 1989 Lagrie & Lew Fai, 1989	21
1990-1998	Campbell, 1990 Ben-David, 1991 Moore, 1991 Stell, 1991 Swart, 1991	

	Simpson, 1991 Cadamil, 1992 Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992 Lauderback, Hansen & Waldorf, 1992 Gilfus, 1992 Figueira-McDonough, 1992 Ben-David, 1993 Baskin & Sommers, 1993 Baskins, Sommers & Fagan, 1993 Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993 Calhoun, Jurgens & Chen, 1993 Chesney-Lind, 1993 Culliver, 1993 Mathews, 1993 Reitsma-Street, 1993 Sommers & Baskin Taylor, 1993 Harris, 1994 Moore, 1994 White & Kowalski, 1994 Felkenes & Becker, 1995 Burris-Kitchen, 1995 Flower, 1995 Klein, 1995 Lloyd, 1995 Messerschmidt, 1995 Moore, Vigil & Levy, 1995 Brotherton, 1996 Chesney-Lind, Shelden & Joe, 1996 Coslin, 1996 Evans, Albers, Macan & Mason, 1996 Mendoza-Renton, 1996 Moore & Hagedorn, 1996 Molidor, 1996 Omll'Chenko, 1996 Rosenbaum, 1996 Tanner, 1996 Burris-Kitchen, 1997 Carrington & Moyer, 1997 Chesney-Lind, 1997 Messerschmidt, 1997 Miller, 1997 Nelson, 1997 Pate, 1997 Artz, 1998 Curry, 1998 Doob & Sprott, 1998	53

These figures show that there has been a dramatic increase in both print journalist and social science constructions of the social problem of girls' violence and gang involvement in the last decade. However, print journalists seem to have picked up the issue of girls' violence and gang involvement much later than social scientists. Quite a few social science sources appeared as

early as the 1970s, while only five articles appeared in the Canadian print media during the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, it appears that the Canadian print journalists have constructed girls' violence and gang involvement as a more recent social problem than have social scientists.

CHAPTER VI: RECENT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY EACH CLAIMS-MAKING GROUP

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce, with reference to the sample data as well as outside sources, the types of conclusions or calls for action Canadian print journalists and social scientists have been making in the 1990s with respect to girls' violence and gang involvement (and youth crime in general) as a social problem. This chapter will also discuss how the different claims made by each claims-making group can influence their approaches to alleviating this social problem, and may affect the views held by the public.

1. Conclusion Statements Made By Claims-Makers in the Research Sample:

Claims-makers usually try to seek solutions to alleged social problems through official policy (Best, 1990; Doppelt & Manikas, 1990). Best (1990: 37) argued that claims-makers present their solutions to social problems in the form of conclusions. He defined conclusion statements as typically including "calls for action to alleviate or eradicate the social problem". Best maintained that claims-makers may influence policy with their conclusions by calling for the formation of new policies, and providing "lists of demands, identify what sorts of policies are needed, or in some cases develop draft policies, such as model legislations" (Best, 1995: 259). He also argued that claims-makers influence policy in another way. Claims-makers typify social problems in a certain manner, and policy-makers may subsequently consider these typifications when designing social policies. Best argued that conclusion statements usually involved calls for awareness and public support, preventative measures, or the development of social control policies (Best, 1990: 38).

Not very many explicit conclusion statements were found in the claims within either the Canadian print journalists or social scientists samples of this study. When conclusions were drawn, both groups made similar statements, despite the different approaches taken and claims

made by each claims-making group about the issue of girls' violence and gang involvement. Only six out of the thirty articles in the print journalists sample made suggestions as to how increasing levels of girls' violence and gang involvement could be curbed. Their conclusion statements were typically calls for more preventive services for girls. These print media claimants argued that better parenting was needed, and that girls and their parents should be offered services involving the cooperation of schools, families and the community in order to prevent the development of delinquent behaviour. These claims usually appeared toward the end of the newspaper articles, and such solutions were not given very much exposure as they were typically presented in short paragraphs:

> Schools should focus their resources and efforts on preventing the formation of gangs...Measures to prevent the growth of gangs include: encouraging students to report gang violence, training staff to identify gang presence in the school, holding student information assemblies and parent meetings and increasing community ties with police and local businesses (*TS* April 7, 1998: A22).

> 'We have to look at these girls' experiences for answers,' she [sociologist Elizabeth Comack] said. 'We need to recognize the violence in women's and girls' lives if we are going to understand what is happening' (*WFP* Oct.10,1995: A2).

> 'Groups, families, neighbourhoods, organizations, schools. All of these are necessary to provide a chance for adequate and good parenting,' [psychiatrist Larry] Stone said. 'If not, the child grows up in somewhat of a vacuum. A value vacuum' (*CH* Dec.1, 1995: .B8).

Not surprisingly, the few conclusion statements which appeared in the Canadian print journalists sample calling for preventative measures were provided by social scientists and other experts.

Six out of the seventeen documents in the social science sample contained conclusion statements. These social scientists made calls for greater awareness, preventative services and new social control policies with regards to girls' violence and gang involvement. The conclusions typically suggested that more services are needed that meet both the needs of girls and the needs of ethnic youth in dispossessed neighbourhoods. They also included calls for awareness of the needs of girls in schools and families, and suggested that girls' histories of abuse and the effects

of sexism must be addressed. Furthermore, many social scientists claimed that more services for girls must be implemented in the criminal justice system, that the public should resist taking stock in the 'false' conception that girls are becoming more violent, and that further in-depth research into the lives of violent female gang members is required:

> Programs are needed that offer gang members an opportunity for success away from the gang milieu. The gang provides identity, status, cohesion and esteem needs. Programs that would provide these needs while excluding delinquent acts as a way of achieving them should be more affective...Current policies of the schools illustrate the gap between the dominant value system operating in the school system and the values and attitudes of the Latino girls in this study. Knowledge and acceptance of the minority view is needed and lacking (Harris, 1988: 191).

> As young women are demonized by the media, their genuine problems can be marginalized and then ignored. Indeed, they and their boy counterparts have become the problem. The challenge, to those concerned about these youth, then, is twofold. First, responsible work on gangs must make the dynamics of this victim blaming clear. Second, it must continue to build an understanding of gangs that is sensitive to the contexts within which they arise (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996: 177).

> We must all commit to transforming the social and economic position of girls and women and adamantly challenge attempts to further subjugate women if we are truly interested in addressing violence in our communities. We must also refuse to fuel panic with exaggerated and inaccurate claims about increased violent offending by women and girls (Pate, 1997: 32).

> This suggests that any violence prevention program we envision - including programs aimed at adolescent school girls - should include an abuse-survivor recovery component that addresses the female experience in positive and strength-giving ways...Violence prevention programming must take into account the systemic ways in which girls and women are sexually misused and exploited, and must help both females and males find constructive ways to understand and relate to females (Artz, 1998: 201, 204).

Based on these examples of the conclusions drawn by the print media and expert claimants, it seems that some solutions are similar between the groups, but that the claimants emphasize different arenas necessary for change. The print media claimants addressed elements of change to be existent in the community, involving recommendations for the development of partnerships between schools, families and neighbourhoods with the common goal of prevention. They also argued that the key to preventing girls' violence and gang involvement is through better

parenting, and thus place blame on the parents for girls' delinquent behaviour. On the other hand, the expert claimants argued for more wide-spread social reform in addition to improvements in families, schools and communities. They argued for changes to the economic and social positions of females, as well as suggested that better relations between races and the sexes are required in order to prevent girls' violence and gang involvement. The conclusion statements made by each claims-making group are thus highly reflective of their views as to the nature and causes of girls' violence and gang involvement. The print journalists frequently alleged that this 'increasing' phenomenon was due to the personal maladjustment of girls, their sexual competitiveness, and the inability of some to forge meaningful relationships with parents and boys. This claims-making group thus concluded that the solution to this maladjustment lies in the helping hands of such socializing institutions and authority figures as parents, schools and police. Conversely, the social scientists identified the cause of girls' violence and gang involvement to be predominantly found in social structural imbalance, which negatively affect relations in families, schools and communities, and thus concluded that widespread social change was required in order to begin to eliminate the 'criminogenic' risk factors existent in some girls' environments and social situations.

The majority of the print journalists in the sample did not seem to address the problems inherent in the social structure which could predispose girls to entry into the gang. This finding is consistent with Best's (1989) and Johnson's (1995) argument that network news stories about threats to children and child abuse, respectively, rarely involve social analysis or references to stresses related to race, class and other social forces, but instead argue that the cause of these threats lies within the characters of flawed individuals. Best (1989: 276) argued that the media fail to address such causal factors because "the more distance between the viewer and the story, the poorer the story's chances for breaking into the network news...threats which can strike anyone - including people just like us - make better stories than threats to someone else".

2. The Implications of the Claims-Makers Conclusions on Social Policy Formation:

In recent years, there has been an on-going debate as to what should be done about rising amounts of youth crime and violence in Canada (Artz, 1998). The issue of girls' violence and gang involvement has been at the fore of this debate, as recent 'shocking increases' in the amount of female violence have heated up the debate over appropriate punishment for violent young offenders. This debate about youth crime in general has taken place in both academic and public circles, and seems to involve the same double construction as does the issue of girls' violence and gang involvement by these two groups.

2.1 Print Media Claimants:

With respect to policy formation, I originally set out in this study to find out the kinds of calls for reform each claims-making group had recently made in order to alleviate the social problem in question. I expected to find that Canadian print journalists would be arguing for tougher penalties under the Young Offenders Act to deal with perceived 'increasing' amounts of girls' violence and gang involvement. I expected to find such claims because articles discussing the toughening of the Young Offenders Act (YOA) have commonly appeared in the Canadian news media over the past decade (Corrado, 1994: 87), and thus this seems to be a popular discourse in the Canadian print media. Surprisingly, not one of the thirty newspaper/magazine articles analyzed in the Canadian print journalists sample contained claims arguing that the way to deal with 'increasing' amounts of girls' violence and gang involvement was to seek tougher sanctions against youth under the YOA. Therefore, in order to present a complete discussion of the calls for action being made with regards to the social problem of girls' violence and gang involvement, I ventured outside of the sample to isolate the kinds of conclusion statements being made about young offenders in general in the print media.

Typical action claims which were presented by Canadian print journalists addressed reforms to the YOA and included the new measures the government wished to impose on young

criminals, statistics assessing the extent of the youth crime problem and thus expressing the need for amendments, and quotes from government officials. Some of these claims included:

> But Liberal MPs will recommend that some children between the age of 10 and 12 who are charged with murder or "serious bodily harm" could face the criminal law (*VS* April 19, 1997: A4).

> [Justice Minister Anne] McLellan is expected to announce changes that would see more violent offenders named publicly, to answer concerns about public safety and to deal with "accountability and openness in the justice system", sources said (*TS* May 12, 1998: A7).

> Violent offences such as murder, attempted murder, aggravated sexual assault and assault total only 17 per cent, justice department records show. Property offences are 52 per cent and 31 per cent are "other" offences, such as fraud and theft over $1,000. In Canada, convicted young offenders face an incarceration rate four times higher than convicted adult offenders (*TS* May 12, 1998: A7).

> [Solicitor-General] Mr. Runciman intends to tell the committee that young criminals have come to appreciate the flimsy provisions of the act and break the law with impunity because they know any punishment will be light. "The public has little confidence in the youth justice system - and they are right," Mr. Runciman will say. "Youth violence threatens the very framework of what we value in our society" (*G&M* June 3, 1996: A1, A3).

Kingsbury (1997: 100) argued that the demands for harsher punishments for youth by some elements in the government and the media are an attempt to "appease public outcry, regardless of whether this reaction is well-founded or not". This goal of public appeasement becomes evident when considering claims made by government officials as well as the strong convictions held by citizens, which have frequently been aired in Canadian newspapers:

> "I think Canadians should be very encouraged that we are taking violent youth crime very seriously," [Justice Minister Anne] McLellan told a press conference to announce her plans to scrap the existing Young Offenders Act (*TS* May 13,1998: A7).

> Tracy Walsh, a victims' advocate who was sexually assaulted 15 years ago, said she intends to present the group's [Mothers Against the System] 1,900-name petition calling for tougher sentencing under the Young Offenders Act... "Getting locked up in a youth centre, that's nothing," [group member Nancy] Laforte said. "That's just like the Holiday Inn to them" (*WFP* Sept. 24, 1995: A3).

> More than 1,700 callers have flooded a phone opinion line to push for toughening up the Young Offenders Act. The hotline opinion poll, organized by Markham firefighter Bill Baker after he saw a television campaign urging that youths accused of murder be tried in adult court, has received 1,795 calls since it was started last Thursday (*TS* July 4, 1995: A5).

Thus, notwithstanding that a few print media claimants have argued for the solutions of better parenting and the provision of more services for girls with respect to their 'increasing' violence and gang involvement, the toughening of the Young Offenders Act appears to be a call for action against 'rising' youth crime which is currently receiving great attention in the Canadian print media.

2.2 Expert Claimants:

Based on the research samples in this study, it appears that the most common calls for action made by social scientists concerned the introduction of more gender-focused services for young girls, but also involved a demand for the reorganization of social, economic, and political arrangements in society. Delinquency prevention programs for girls were commonly identified as requiring the multiple components of counseling, education, job opportunities, housing for girls who could not return home, and support for girls with histories of physical and sexual abuse (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992: 183-198). Many social scientists also argued that if girls' violence and gang involvement were to be reduced, the negative societal conditions which predisposed girls to delinquent behaviour, such as poverty, racism, sexism and limited opportunity structures, would have to be attacked and alleviated (Artz, 1998; Chesney-Lind et al, 1996; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996; Pate, 1997; Campbell, 1990; Harris, 1988; Fishman, 1988).

In Canada, social scientists' recommendations for policy in the attempt to reduce youth crime have been consistent with their solutions to the social problem, but in contrast with the recommendations of the government, the media and the public. Judge Archambault (1991: x) noted that there was a division between professional groups in attitudes towards the YOA, and

that this division resulted in an imbalance in its implementation. He argued that upon its introduction in 1985, the YOA was accepted with open arms by law enforcement professionals, as:

> the police, who had long been hard done by under the Juvenile Delinquents Act, saw the opportunity with the Young Offenders Act to claim new turf that had long been elusive...a lot of resources were made available to ensure implementation of the 'justice' aspects of the new law (e.g. legal aid and new custodial institutions)" (Archambault, 1991: x).

Archambault argued that the professionals in the social and behavioural sciences on the other hand, were not so accepting of the YOA, and criticized the Act for its 'pure justice' nature, and its lack of treatment and rehabilitation for young offenders. He noted that:

> the undue emphasis placed on public protection over the needs and treatment of young offenders has undoubtedly contributed to the overuse of incarceration. With the advent of the Young Offenders Act far too many people fell into the error of equating public protection with harsh treatment and severe sanctions (Archambault, 1991: x).

Thus, with respect to the Young Offenders Act, Canadian social scientists emerge from the debate as those who are critical of the YOA, but not in the same way as many members of the government, the media and the public are critical of the Act. Unlike several members of the government, the media and the public, social scientists do not want the YOA to be toughened, as this would encourage the negative consequence of the increased use of incarceration and lead to more youth in prison. Instead, they argue for more treatment and rehabilitation programs for youth in conflict with the law, and pay close attention to the rights of the young offender (West, 1991; Schwartz, 1991; Archambault, 1991; Jaffe, Leschied & Willis, 1991). Many social scientists are thus in conflict with those members of the government, the media and the public who support stricter amendments to the Young Offenders Act, as they adamantly argue that "the need to protect society is not to be equated with harsh sentences or custodial dispositions" (Archambault, 1991: xii).

3. The Relationship Between Policymakers, The Media, The Public and Social Problems Experts:

Since the news media and its journalists provide the public with the majority of their knowledge about crime (Roshier, 1973; Sherizen, 1978; Jaffe, Leschied & Willis, 1991; Doppelt & Manikas, 1990; Conrad, 1997), they have considerable influence in shaping people's perceptions of crime. The government acts on behalf of the public and may introduce policies to appease public outcry for improvements to the existing system. It can be said that the government implements policies, at least in part, to satisfy the public's media induced conceptions of the crime problem:

> media coverage helps policymakers set their agenda, and they are all the more likely to respond to claims if the public seems responsive to news stories about a problem (Best, 1989: 260).

The government, the media and the public are interconnected groups within the claims-making marketplace, as the government implements new policies on behalf of the public, in part to quell the public outcry, which has been shaped and influenced by extensive media coverage.

In the claims-making marketplace, social scientists who present their findings in professional fora appear to occupy a tenuous place in the relations between the government, the media and the public. The arguments of social scientists are not as frequently disseminated to the public as those of journalists. When their claims about social problems are conveyed to the public, it is usually through the news media (Conrad, 1997: 140), and journalists have a high degree of control over the presentation of social scientists' claims (Best, 1989; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Greek, 1994). With respect to the issue of girls' violence and gang involvement, social scientists' action claims do appear in the Canadian news media, but these claims are frequently overshadowed by powerful headlines and urgent claims that girls are rapidly becoming more violent, that young offenders are without remorse or empathy, and that harsher

sanctions are justified in order to effectively protect society. Such heart-rendering and sensationalist media claims can be those that fuel the public outcry for harsher sanctions against young offenders, as the problem of violent youth crime is typified by the Canadian print media as being possible in all communities and capable of affecting any citizen at any time. The claims made by social scientists that the social, economic, political and personal conditions in which some girls live need to be improved in order to alleviate girls' violence and gang involvement are not given as much exposure as are the urgent claims made by print journalists, and thus are perhaps ignored. This can have unfortunate consequences for girls in trouble, as their behaviour may be inappropriately met with incarceration. Thus, it becomes clear through an examination of the policy recommendations of Canadian print journalists and social scientists with respect to girls' violence and gang involvement in specific, and youth crime in general, that in the claims-making market place, the social problem of youth crime and its reform are dominated "by those who favour a stricter crime control agenda" (Kingsbury, 1997: 100).

CHAPTER VII: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

DISCUSSION:

The latent and manifest content analyses conducted in this study revealed that the current claims made by Canadian print journalists and social scientists encompass a double construction of the issue of girls' violence and gang involvement as a social problem. The findings indicated that Canadian print journalists in the 1990s sample represented girls' violence and gang involvement as a rapidly increasing problem, and supported this claim with the use of national and local statistics. These journalists also argued that girls' violence and gang involvement has become a widespread social evil which can occur in all Canadian communities. The print journalists defined girls today as more likely than girls of earlier decades to be violent, ruthless and brutal perpetrators of crime. These claimants use dramatic rhetoric in headlines and grabbers to frame the urgency of the social problem. The content analysis findings indicated that Canadian print journalists frequently identified changes to the moral framework in society, girls' personal maladjustment, women's liberation, and girls' sexual competitiveness as causes for this 'increasing' social problem. Furthermore, the analysis and an examination of recent newspaper articles about the Young Offenders Act revealed that some calls for action were made requesting more services for girls and parents in communities, but such claims were overshadowed by the power and prominence of news media discussions justifying the toughening of the YOA.

On the other hand, the analysis of the recent social science literature revealed vastly different claims about girls' violence and gang involvement. The majority of the social scientists in the 1980s and 1990s samples portrayed girls' violence and gang involvement as a problem which is isolated in marginalized ethnic minority, lower-class neighbourhoods. They also argued that the problem is not rapidly increasing, and some contended that the level and volume of girls' violence today has been exaggerated and distorted in media representations. The social scientists

saw the marginalized girls as capable of violent behaviour, but argued that this violence is due to violence perpetrated against them, or can be attributed to the norm of violence which is existent in their communities. The social scientists predominantly identified the causes of girls' violence and gang involvement to be a lack of opportunities and violence in dispossessed communities, and histories of physical and sexual abuse. The analysis of the social science literature and of related outside sources revealed that social scientists typically call for better services for girls in communities as a solution, but they also present a need for broad social reform in order to alleviate the social problem. Moreover, Canadian social scientists argued against the toughening of the YOA as a solution to youth crime, as more youth in prison negatively impacts on youth and is less cost-effective (Pate, 1997; Leschied, Jaffe & Willis, 1991).

The only claim that both groups made over time with regards to this issue was that the culture of girls' violence and gang involvement is associated with the commission of other serious offences, prostitution, drug and alcohol abuse, further physical and sexual abuse, a high rate of school dropouts, weapons use, and promiscuity.

Based on these findings, it becomes clear that in recent years there has not been much overall congruence between the claims-making of Canadian print journalists and social scientists who present their work in professional fora. While the two groups started off in their respective claims-making with similar claims that girls were much less of a threat to law and order than were boys (see Chapters 3 & 4 for review), their claims-making drastically diverged during the 1980s and 1990s. Each group has recently explained and typified the issues of girls' violence and gang involvement in different ways with the use of distinctive rhetoric.

Upon reading recent print media and social science literature on this topic, I discovered that each group attempts to evoke a different reaction from the reader with the use of highly persuasive language. With the help of explicit headlines and attention grabbing introductions, print journalists have the power to frame the issue in question within the first few words of their

articles. Such headlines as "Brutal girls are new kids in world of violent crime" and "Violence on upswing among teenaged girls" lend an urgency to the social problem and convey a dramatic message of danger about girls to the public. Journalists thus individualize the social problem by placing blame for it on deviant individuals, not considering the social forces that can negatively influence human behaviour (Johnson, 1995: 27). Social scientists writing in professional publications are less likely to individualize the problem. Rather than convey the message of urgent danger about girls' potential for violence and gang involvement, they see the violence perpetrated by some girls as situational. Thus, the two groups and their claims represent dichotomous views with respect to girls' violence and gang involvement. Print journalists dramatize the events of girls' violence and act as advocates for the victims of the female perpetrators by referring to the senseless nature of the attacks and the innocence of the victims. Conversely, social scientists writing in professional publications often act as advocates for the female perpetrators, in that they portray the girls as innocent victims of harsh environments in which they were born and live, and present their violence as an expected consequence of such unfortunate situations beyond their control. Essentially, print journalists represent girls in general in a way which inspires fear and titillates readers by emphasizing their increased potential for 'brutality' and 'ruthlessness', while social scientists writing in professional fora present a sympathetic version of the lives of violence in which some girls find themselves.

The print journalists' construction of violent girls as dangerous perpetrators, and the social scientists' construction of them as victims of unbalanced social arrangements contradict each other further. In the 1980s and 1990s, print journalists have claimed that the problem of girls' violence and gang involvement is a shockingly new and increasing problem because girls have traditionally been considered as less capable of serious offences, such as assault and weapons use. On the other hand, many social scientists have been discussing girls' violence and gang involvement for a longer time than print journalists, since the 1920s (Thrasher, 1927). They

argue that although girls have been part of gangs for a long time, their involvement in violence has apparently become greater in recent years. However, they argue that this increase does not apply to all girls, but that girl violence has seen an on-going escalation in realms associated with the social marginalization of those groups who are affected by gender, race and class variables.

Upon observation of the amount of literature produced by expert and print media claimants about girls' violence and gang involvement over the past three decades, one notices a dramatic increase in production by both groups in the 1990s (see Tables 2 & 3). This increase in claims-making supports Best's (1990: 65) argument that in order to survive in the social problems marketplace, claims-makers must reconstruct problems to keep them fresh and in the public eye. Print journalists and social scientists thus appear to be struggling claims-makers who continually make varying claims about girls' violence and gang involvement to keep up with the demand for new claims about social problems.

The conflicting images of girls' violence and gang involvement clarify that the media and its journalists and social scientists have different agendas when dealing with social problems. While each group may be in consideration of several professional interests when making claims (social scientists with exploring social phenomena, and simultaneously advancing their careers; print journalists with informing the public, and generating enough controversy to sell papers), this study indicates the primary interest of each group when making claims about girls' violence and gang involvement. Print journalists' sensational emphasis on the 'increasing brutal violence' of girls shows that it is the primary interest of many print media publications to sell a product, to entertain, and to inform about social problems. The social scientists' method of sympathetically discussing the contexts within which girls' violence and gang membership exist indicates that their primary agenda concerns the exploration and understanding of the nature and causes of social problems.

The claims put forth by print journalists and social scientists about girls' violence and gang involvement leave many questions unanswered. Print journalists tend to exaggerate and distort the magnitude and nature of girls' violence and gang involvement in their claims-making to an impressionable public. One example of the kind of power journalists have over representations of crime involves their ability to make a social problem appear widespread. One television news broadcast focusing on the recent 'increase' of girls' violence in Canada, which aired in 1998, presented an interview with a Kitchener lawyer who claimed that he was aware of a case where a young girl was beaten by three other girls and forced to drink water containing cigarette ashes (*W5 - CTV*, March 10, 1998). Although this lawyer did not indicate how recently this incident had occurred (it occurred prior to 1996), the impression was given that this was a current event. However, the same lawyer had been quoted several years earlier discussing the same incident as an example of the 'increasingly' violent tendencies of young girls (*CH* Sept. 14, 1995: B8). The effect of not qualifying in the present when this incident took place and recycling it from the past gave the false impression that such 'ruthless' incidents of girls' violence were an on-going and frequently occurring phenomenon.

Further distortions were found in the Canadian print journalists sample of this study, as I discovered that journalists would sometimes decontextualize incidents of girls' violence and neglect to mention that the reason why a girl had acted violently was because she was reacting to violence perpetrated against her. For example, in an article appearing in the Globe & Mail (*G&M* July 15, 1995: A5), the journalist reported that three 14-year-old girls were being charged with manslaughter and robbery after they had stabbed a 34-year-old man who had stopped to help them. This man was described as a Good Samaritan to have stopped for the girls, who then in turn 'viciously' stabbed him. However, it was not revealed in this article (though it was in later articles) that the girls and the man drank together for four hours, and that he was in fact stabbed because he tried to force one of the girls to perform oral sex (*Maclean's*, Dec. 8, 1997: 15). The

failure of the journalist to put this incident in its full context placed a false slant on it by implying that the girls acted ruthlessly and brutally in the form of an unprovoked attack on an innocent victim.

Furthermore, over fourteen of the twenty-seven newspaper articles in the 1990s print journalists study contained inaccurate explanations of official statistics regarding rates of female offending. Several journalists commonly claimed that "in Canada, young women account for 24 per cent of all violent offences in their age group, compared with 10 per cent for adult women..." (*G&M* Jan.20, 1998: A1). The presentation of these statistics was rarely accompanied by a statement relating this figure to the introduction of zero tolerance policies which have led to the redefining as violent of behaviour previously considered to be non-violent. Seven print journalists in the 1990s sample presented statistical claims which resembled this one:

> A 1990-1991 Statistics Canada study on female young offenders concludes girls are becoming more violent, and turning to crime faster than boys. The number of female youths charged by police rose to 23,610 in 1990 from 18,335 in 1986 (*CH* July 23, 1992: C6).

Such claims were not supported by any indication as to what the charges laid against the female youths entailed. Thus, these journalists did not provide accurate explanations of the statistics as it was not revealed what behaviour was considered to be violent or non-violent.

There were also several occasions in the print journalists sample where one or more isolated incidents of girls' violence was used as an indication that this problem was rapidly increasing, and increasing among the entire young female population. One particular article in the Calgary Herald argued that a singular stabbing incident by a girl in Calgary was a sign that violence among girls was on the rise (*CH* Feb. 16, 1996: B5). After the occurrence of the beating death of Reena Virk by seven girls and a boy on November 14, 1997, several articles were published in Canadian newspapers claiming that "Teen's tragic killing sounds alarm for all of us" (*TS* Nov.28, 1997: A2), and "Girls growing more violent, aggressive" (*TS* April 7, 1998: A2).

Throughout the print journalists sample, there was also a regular use of explicit rhetoric describing girls' delinquent behaviour as becoming more 'brutal', 'vicious', 'ruthless' and 'violent'. It is obvious that all of these patterns represent techniques used by journalists to make their stories more newsworthy and interesting to the public. The unfortunate consequence of these sensationalist measures is of course that the public are misled and misinformed by the print media about such social problems as girls' violence and gang involvement.

The flaws in the social science research on girls' violence and gang involvement are not as many as those in the print journalists sample, but they are still important to note. While social scientists' exploration of the situations in which girls' violence and gangs arise may be beneficial to understanding the phenomenon and finding a solution to this delinquent behaviour, the researchers tend to restrict their exploration of this behaviour to minority, lower class girls. While minority, lower-class girls seem to be disproportionately involved in the culture of violence and gangs, and ample study is required in order to understand why this is the case, the majority of social scientists are ignoring similar behaviour among middle class, white girls. Out of this study's social science sample of seventeen documents, only one researcher had conducted an ethnographic study on the violent behaviour of white, middle class girls (Artz, 1998). This lack of information on violence and gang involvement amongst white, middle class girls presents a large gap in social science research which should no longer be ignored.

Furthermore, the heavy focus that certain social scientists place on the implication that the lower class, minority girls who are disproportionately involved in violent gang behaviour are victims of dispossessed environments and violent homes runs the risk of providing an excuse for their deviant behaviour. Lamb (1996: 90-91) argues that "the recent 'discovery' of victimization in the lives of perpetrators confuses the public, and a portion of that sanctified-victim persona can be borrowed to help diffuse some of the perpetrator's responsibility for his behaviour". This diffusion of the perpetrator's responsibility for her act would not be beneficial for rehabilitation

as she may not feel she has done anything wrong. Furthermore, excusing these girls for their violent behaviour due to social and emotional factors might lead to a controversial slippery slope, as such an excuse may lead to a justification for a group of behaviours once socially defined as extremely unacceptable:

> Another consequence of our overemphasis on the horrors of victimization is that the more we see abuse as inevitably causing a devastating outcome, the more we can excuse perpetrators who have been abused for their present and future abusive behaviour (Lamb, 1996: 91).

While neither of the print journalists' and social scientists' constructions of girls' violence and gang involvement are without inconsistencies, the social science research does seem to have a more realistic grasp on a diverse range of factors which appear to predispose girls to a violent or gang lifestyle, as social scientists consider both background and foreground factors in the lives of girls. They also include thoughtful suggestions for prevention. Out of the two constructions, that of the print journalists' is the most problematic as it has the potential to incite undue fear in the public, which may result in their support of harsh amendments to legislation which could place more youth in prison. However, the print journalists are not all wrong in their construction, as some of the factors emphasized by these claimants, for example low self-esteem and messages of sex and violence in popular culture, do appear to affect girls today.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the findings of this study, print journalists and social problems experts are competing reality constructing enterprises. Each group represents a different perspective about girls' violence and gang involvement, and social problems in general. It is within the interests of some print journalists to select and present stories based on their newsworthiness and selling potential (Surette, 1991). As has been well established, the dramatic stories containing crime, sex, violence and sensationalism are those that appeal to the public, and have a great impact on their

views of crime (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Roshier, 1973). The news media, as world wide information purveyors, have the power to deliver their claims and images into the homes of billions everyday. They thus can be seen as powerful and distinctive reality constructors which have the capability to shape and influence the ideas about social problems that their gigantic public audience can hold. With respect to the social problem of girls' violence and gang involvement, Canadian print journalists as media representatives construct this phenomenon as a rapidly increasing problem which has at its heart a new and dangerous breed of amoral, misguided young girls.

Social problems experts, with their greater focus on research and the understanding of social phenomena, present a different view of the nature of social problems, and more specifically girls' violence and gang involvement. The primary interest of the social scientists discussed in this study appeared to be the exploration of social phenomena in order to better understand society, as they sought to explore the lives of girls involved in violence and gangs, and to understand the contexts in which such conditions arise. Social scientists continue to research this problem with a sympathetic eye, as they argue that the situations in which some violent girls find themselves beget a culture of violence in which they are forced to participate for survival. Thus, the reality of girls' violence and gang involvement which social scientists construct is one where girls who have been marginalized by social forces acting against them, such as racism, poverty, and sexism, naturally respond to violence with violence. However, the social scientists' opinion is mostly disseminated in academic circles and is not as freely distributed to the public. When such opinions do appear in the media, it is the result of a process of differential selection, truncating and shaping to fit the agenda of particular media outlets.

One of the most compelling aspects about the double construction of this issue, is that it exists despite the fact that the news media and social problems experts have a relationship and are not independent of each other. The news media and its journalists incorporate and rely on the

claims of social problems experts to make their representations of events more credible and interesting. However, with respect to the issue of girls' violence and gang involvement, the print journalists' overall message emerges as very different from that of the social scientists which were studied. This incongruence occurs because journalists have the power to control the context in which expert claims appear, giving them minimal exposure and restricting them to small paragraphs or short sound bites. Furthermore, journalists tend to selectively consult certain experts who provide information supporting the interests and preferred message of the media as an organization (Greek, 1994; Barak; 1994). The news media reach more people, and while they include the claims of social scientists, their ultimate control over the appearance of such claims makes their message the more predominant one.

To say that journalists' claims inspire fear or moral panic with respect to the public's views of young girls, and that social scientists' claims do not, is an oversimplification of what the differences between the two claims-making groups indicate. At the heart of the incongruence between the claims-making of the news media and social scientists is that each group has a different agenda when discussing social problems, and thus construct different realities which affect the public in different ways.

Recommendations for Future Research and Change:

This study indicates that the differential claims-making of print journalists and social scientists about girls' violence and gang involvement carries with it several implications for girls, and boys, today. The sensationalist claims-making of print journalists can spark public outcry and fear about rising youth crime in Canada, which in turn can lead to support for stricter crime control amendments to the Young Offenders Act. In the sea of media claims and public support of these claims, the claims of social scientists that these amendments will not help young offenders but will place more of them in prison, appear to be ignored. Thus, due to a variety of factors (economic constraints, judicial conflicts, etc.) compounded by media sensationalism, there

is a greater chance that young offenders will not receive all of the services they need in order to better deal with the 'criminogenic' factors that have been identified as predisposing them to gang involvement and violence, as amendments to the YOA are currently being developed by Canadian government officials. As the news media are obviously powerful claims-makers, more research needs to be conducted on the impact print and broadcast journalists' construction of social problems has on public opinion, with a focus on how they might use and manipulate expert knowledge to produce stories that fit the media corporate agenda. In addition, more in-depth research needs to be conducted on all girls who engage in violence and are involved in gangs. Ethnographic studies need to be conducted which study violence and gangs involving a variety of girls from different ethnic and class backgrounds. This will allow researchers to fully understand the complex phenomenon of girls' violence and gang involvement.

Idealistically, a change needs to occur in the ways social scientists and journalists approach the social problem of crime in order to satisfy the needs of the groups for which they respectively act as advocates. Journalists should try to make a greater effort to be less exploitative of the perpetrators of crime and less manipulative of the expert knowledge which primarily defends these perpetrators. Social scientists should ideally choose to involve themselves in what Barak (1994) terms a 'newsmaking criminology', and be more cognizant of journalists' representations of their research findings on crime. The discrepant constructions of girls' violence and gang involvement produced by Canadian print journalists and social scientists, and the negative political consequences these constructions can bring, indicate that it is these improved connections between social problems experts and journalists that are vital. Unfortunately, achieving these relations will be difficult. A total reconciliation or the establishing of an equal partnership between these two groups is an unrealizable challenge given the fundamentally different agendas print journalists and social problems experts hold today as two distinct reality-constructing enterprises. Perhaps a greater awareness of each others' agendas is a more realistic

aspiration for the improvement of media and expert representations of social problems, and for the sake of young girls and boys at-risk and in conflict with the law today.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF MEDIA AND SOCIAL SCIENCE SOURCES ANALYZED IN STUDY

Print Journalists Sample (listed by newspaper) :

1. *Toronto Star*, Nov. 28, 1997: A2
2. *Toronto Star*, April 7, 1998: A22
3. *Globe & Mail*, Jan. 20, 1998: A1, A5
4. *Globe & Mail*, Nov. 18, 1997: A1
5. *Toronto Star*, Dec. 9, 1997: C3
6. *Toronto Star*, Dec. 6, 1997: E4
7. *Vancouver Sun*, Dec. 1, 1997: A1, B8
8. *Globe & Mail*, Nov. 29, 1997: D5
9. *Vancouver Sun*, Nov. 25, 1997: A1
10. *Maclean's*, Dec. 8, 1997: 12-16
11. *Calgary Herald*, Feb. 16, 1996: B5
12. *Vancouver Sun*, May 21, 1996: B6
13. *Toronto Star*, Dec. 10, 1996: C1, C2
14. *Calgary Herald*, Nov. 23, 1996: B1
15. *Globe & Mail*, July 15, 1995: A5
16. *Calgary Herald*, Oct. 21, 1995: B9
17. *Globe & Mail*, Sept. 12, 1995: A10
18. *Toronto Star*, Aug. 12, 1995: C4
19. *Calgary Herald*, Dec. 1, 1995: B8
20. *Winnipeg Free Press*, Oct. 10, 1995: A1
21. *Calgary Herald*, Sept. 14, 1995: B8
22. *Globe & Mail*, Dec. 14, 1994: A14

23. *Calgary Herald*, July 23, 1992: C6

24. *Vancouver Sun*, May 29, 1992: A3

25. *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 29, 1992: A20

26. *Globe & Mail*, May 29, 1992: A9

27. *Calgary Herald*, May 29, 1992: B1

28. *Winnipeg Free Press*, Jan. 6, 1984: 3

29. *Montreal Gazette*, Nov. 15, 1979: 41

30. *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 16, 1979: 51

Social Science Sample:

1. Artz, 1998

2. Messerschmidt, 1997

3. Pate, 1997

4. Chesney-Lind, Shelden & Joe, 1996

5. Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1996

6. Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993

7. Campbell, 1990

8. Harris, 1988

9. Fishman, 1988

10. Campbell, 1987

11. Bowker & Klein, 1983

12. Steffensmeier & Steffensmeier, 1980

13. Giordano, 1978

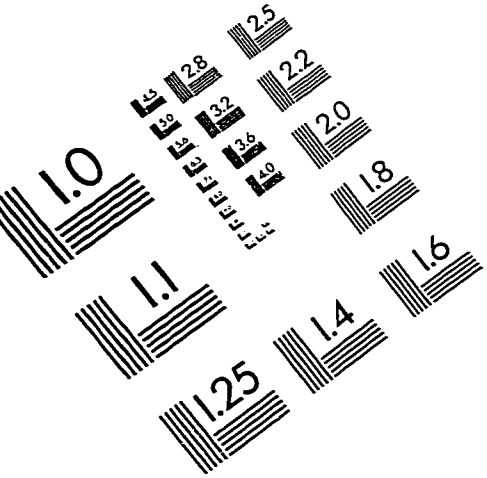
14. Brown, 1977

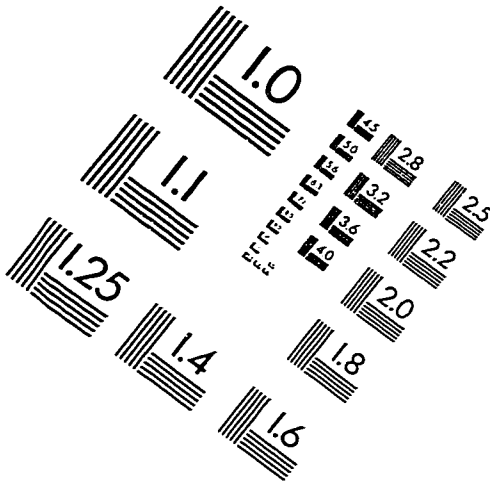
15. Thompson & Lozes, 1976

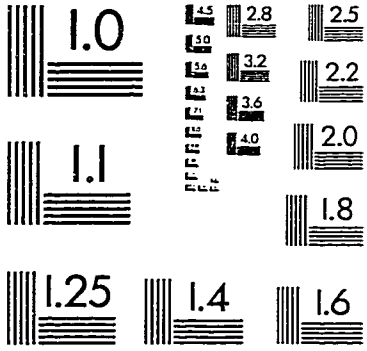
16. Adler, 1975

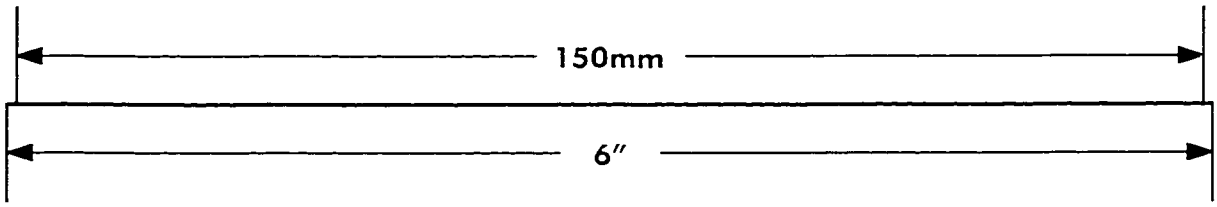
17. Miller, 1973

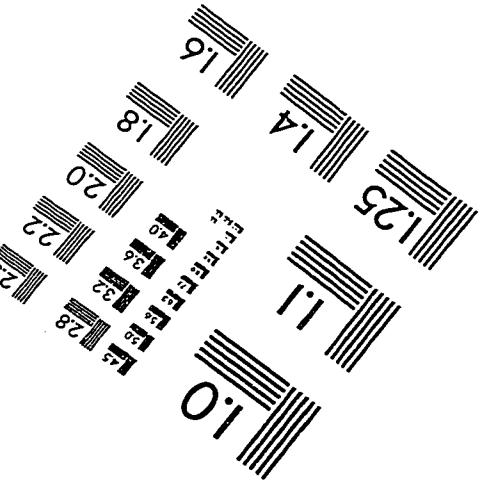
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

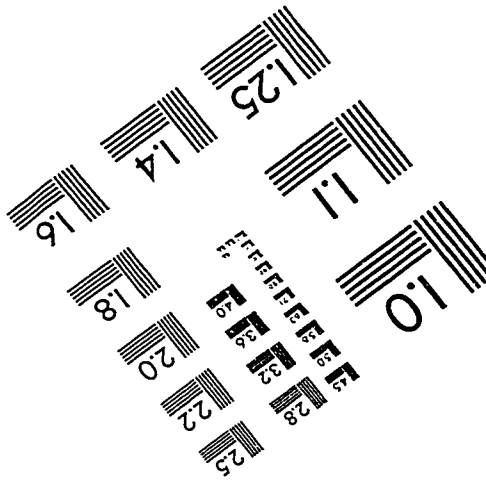












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