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GRADE / DEGREE

Department of Criminology

FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

**Community-Based Programs:
Reflecting the Experiences of "At-Risk" and Criminalized Young Women?**

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**Community-Based Programs: Reflecting the Experiences of “At-Risk” and
Criminalized Young Women?**

Jamie M. Kwong

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Masters of Arts in Criminology

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-69092-5
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-69092-5

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Abstract

This study explored the types of services, particularly *gender-specific* services, available for “at-risk” and criminalized young women. The qualitative methodology entailed interviews with youth service providers in community-based programs in Ottawa, Canada. The findings of this study support the feminist research on female youth crime, specifically the presence of common themes found throughout many of these young women’s lives such as violence, family conflict/fragmentation, institutionalization, residential instability/homelessness, drug and alcohol use issues, academic disruption/failure, and health issues. However, the manner in which these participants approached their work with young women often differed depending on their own understandings of these issues. Nevertheless, all of the participants noted various barriers in the ability of such community initiatives in delivering services to youths. Drawing broadly upon feminist perspectives on female delinquency, the analysis of this study focuses on how programs and services provided to “at-risk” and criminalized young women reflected their realities.

Acknowledgements

I am greatly appreciative for the guidance, feedback, and support that Dr. Sylvie Frigon has provided me throughout this whole process.

I would also like to thank my defence committee, Dr. Jennifer Kilty and Dr. Martin Dufresne, for their helpful criticisms that led to the improvement of this thesis.

Also, I am truly thankful to Chris McDonald who provided constant encouragement and support during all those times of self-doubt.

And, I wish to express my gratitude to all of the participants for taking the time to share their work experiences with me.

Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my mom, Monica Kwong.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Literature Review.....	9
The Extent & Nature of Young Women’s Crimes	10
Young Women and Administrative Offences.....	13
Characteristics of Criminalized Young Women.....	15
Violence and Abuse.....	16
Family Dysfunction/Fragmentation.....	18
Institutionalization	19
Drug and Substance Use.....	21
Academic Disruption	22
Physical and Mental Health Issues	22
The Gender-Specific Debate.....	24
What Does Gender-Specific Programming for Young Women Entail?.....	24
Building Young Women’s Resiliency	30
Gaps in Research	32
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework.....	34
Historical Images of Females: Atavistic, Deceitful, and Sexual	36
Biological Explanations.....	36
Sociological Explanations	39
Labelling Theory	41
Feminist Frameworks Within Criminology.....	42
No Longer “Too Few to Count”	48
Women’s Experiences	49
Intersecting Oppressions.....	52
Limitations.....	52
Implications	54
Chapter 3: Research Methodology	57
Research Approach: Qualitative Research	57
Data Collection: Semi-structured Interviews.....	58

The Research Process and Procedures.....	59
Ethical Considerations	60
The Recruitment Process	61
The Participants	62
Data Analysis.....	68
Limitations of the Study	69
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis.....	72
The Experiences of “At-Risk” Young Women	72
Violence & Abuse.....	72
Family Conflict and Fragmentation.....	74
Residential Instability and Homelessness.....	77
Institutionalization.....	80
Drug & Alcohol Issues	83
Academic Disruption/Failure.....	84
Physical & Mental Health Issues.....	86
Chapter 5: The Youth Service Providers’ Perceptions of the Issues, Challenges, and Recommendations.....	88
The Importance of Relationships.....	88
The Challenges to Delivering Services.....	95
Recommendations for Improving Services for At-Risk Young Women & Youth	104
Conclusion	108
Bibliography	114
Appendix A.....	121
Interview Guide	121
Appendix B.....	123
Agency Permission Form	123
Appendix C.....	124
Consent Form.....	124

Introduction

Internationally, it is well documented that compared to their male counterparts, young women make up a small minority of those who commit criminal offences. For instance, in Australia one-fifth of the juveniles that came into contact with the police were female (Richards, 2009). Such gender differences in arrests rates are also mirrored in England (Home Office, 2002) and Canada (Kong & AuCoin, 2008; Taylor-Butts & Bressan, 2008). While there is a smaller gender gap in the United States, boys compared to girls are arrested at a ratio of 2:1 (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004).

Overall, the types of offences that youths commit are often less serious in nature, which is especially true for young women. For example, in the United States of America larceny-theft offences constitute the bulk of both male and female youths' arrests; one out of seven arrests of boys and one out of five arrests of girls were for this one offence. In addition, the status offences of running away and violating curfew/loitering accounted for approximately 21 percent of all girls' arrests in 2000 (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). In contrast, only 4.8 percent of boy's arrests and 2.7 percent of girls' arrests in 2000 were for serious violent crime (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). Similarly, in Australia and the United Kingdom, youths typically commit property crimes rather than crimes against the person, such as minor assaults (Home Office, 2002; Richards, 2009). Such patterns are also reflected in Canadian official statistics and self-report studies (Doob & Sprott, 1998; Fitzgerald, 2003; Kong & AuCoin, 2008).

Nevertheless, how these young women who come into conflict with the law are responded to is often reflected by the youth crime legislation that is in force at the time.

Moreover, Canada, England, the United States, and Australia have all undergone extensive changes in their juvenile justice legislation in recent years (Alder & Worrall, 2004).

Researchers argue that such changes in policies have greatly affected how youth justice officials respond to young persons, often resulting in more youths, especially girls, coming into contact with the youth justice system (Alder & Worrall, 2004; Sharpe & Gelsthorpe, 2009).

In Canada, more particularly, the current Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA, 2002) represents the third era of youth justice. While the first era as represented by the Juvenile Delinquents Act (JDA, 1908-1984) was characterized by a welfare-oriented philosophy, the second era as represented by the Young Offenders Act (YOA, 1984-2002) adopted a more criminal law orientation (Bala, 2005). The current YCJA incorporates a variety of diverse ideological perspectives (Reid & Zuker, 2005) offering a compromise and incorporation of elements from the two previous pieces of legislation (Campbell, 2005). As stated in section 3 of its principles, the YCJA (2002) seeks to address the following concerns:

- (i) prevent crime by addressing the circumstances underlying a young person's offending behaviour,
- (ii) rehabilitate young persons who commit offences and reintegrate them into society, and
- (iii) ensure that a young person is subject to meaningful consequences for his or her offence.

Since its implementation, there has been an increased emphasis on diverting youths, who have not committed violent offences, out of incarceration and into community-based initiatives. A major impetus behind the enactment of the YCJA was to reduce Canada's high rate of custody for young offenders, based on the belief that community-based responses are more effective for dealing with most young offenders (Bala & Roberts, 2006).

Moreover, since the 1980s, there has been a growth in the body of research on young women and crime. Female youths who come into conflict with the law are similar to their male counterparts in many ways, such as they are likely to be financially disadvantaged, come from disrupted and violent families and have difficulties in school (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). However, researchers have also found that there are important gender differences that must be taken into account and examined when designing programming. For instance, while researchers have found that females report significantly higher rates of sexual abuse compared to males (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006), few programs address such victimization (Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002).

In addition, since the 1990s there has been growing concern, more so in the USA than in Canada, with the youth justice system's inability to address the needs or issues that many of the young women who come into conflict with the law experience (Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998; Totten, 2000). Traditional mainstream approaches to prevention and intervention programming for youths were actually developed to address the delinquency of boys as they were often developed and validated on male samples (Reitsma-Street, 1999). This "one-size-fits-all" approach to rehabilitative interventions for youths often fails to take into account factors of gender, race and culture which not only impacts how such programming efforts are offered, but also how well they are received (Campbell, 2005). As such, the issues and needs of young women are either short-changed or neglected altogether (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004).

Thus, various feminist researchers have noted concerns regarding the applicability of the traditional *gender-neutral* youth programming as it often fails to address the issues that many young women experience. Instead, many feminist researchers in criminology propose moving towards *gender-specific* services and programming for young women in an effort to

address the history of ignoring the experiences of this group (Belknap & Holsinger, 2008; Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Totten, 2000).

In light of Canada's youth justice legislation, with its emphasis on involving community-based responses to "preventing" youth crime and "rehabilitating" youths that commit crimes, and the proposed moved towards gender-specific programming for young women, it seems imperative to examine the various types of community-based programs currently available for "at-risk" and criminalized young women.

As such, the focus of this study is on community-based programs and services for "at-risk" and criminalized young women. This study seeks to explore how youth service providers at various community-based agencies that work with "at-risk" youth populations perceive the experiences and issues faced by young women. To do this, I employed semi-structured interviews to explore the viewpoints that these practitioners adhere to and the approaches that they employ in their working relationships with young women. Specifically, I was interested in understanding how these practitioners make sense of the issues that these young women experience. In other words, how do they perceive the problems that young women may disclose to them? For instance, do they view these problems as stemming from the individual young women themselves, from interpersonal relationships, from societal influences, and/or structural forces? Do they view these factors as occurring in isolation or interaction? How do these practitioners perceive the possible solutions to the problems that they have identified?

In addition, this study also aims to document and describe how various community-based agencies, in which these practitioners are employed, are designed and structured and

the types of programs and services they currently offer to young women in the city of Ottawa.

This study attempts to add to the research on “at-risk” and criminalized young women, particularly within the debates regarding gender-specific programming. By examining how youth service providers perceive the needs of these young women, and comparing this information with the current types of programs and services available for these young women, this study seeks to shed more light on community-based initiatives that address young women’s diverse needs and experiences. Specifically, this study explores the availability of gender-specific programs and services for young women within Ottawa and explores how these gender-specific programs may differ from traditional gender-neutral programs. As such, this study explores the necessity and efficacy of gender-specific services in meeting the needs of young women. Such information may assist the youth serving community’s ability to design programs and services which may better reflect the types of issues or needs that young women might want assistance with.

There is a plethora of programs within the community for youths. As such, it is important to define the types of *community-based programs* that were the focus of inquiry for this study. In section 157, the YCJA (2002) defines *community-based* programs as:

- a) Programs that are an alternative to judicial proceedings, such as victim-offender reconciliation programs, mediation programs and restitution programs
- b) Programs that are an alternative to detention before sentencing, such as bail supervision programs; and
- c) Programs that are an alternative to custody, such as intensive support and supervision programs, and programs to carry out attendance orders.

Moreover, under the YCJA’s extrajudicial sanctions programs, youths are often referred and mandated to community-based responses, such as counselling, as part of their conditions, which could be provided by a therapist, doctor, or community agency (Bala,

2005). Referrals to such services are an attempt to address what is perceived as problem behaviours or issues, such as substance abuse, which are believed to be related to their offending behaviours. Thus, such services are believed to prevent further offending behaviours.

For the purpose of this study, participants were recruited from community-based programs operating as non-governmental agencies located within the city of Ottawa. Specifically, this study examined youth service agencies whose mission statement explicitly states that its programs and services seek to address issues found to increase youths' risk of coming into conflict with the law, such as victimization and substance use. While some of these agencies specifically work with youths that are court-ordered to participate in their programs and services, many of these agencies' programs and services are available to any youths experiencing such issues and may want to access these services. Furthermore, since this research study aims to explore gender-specific services for young women, participants were recruited from agencies that offer such programming.

In order to address the issues pertaining in this research, this thesis is comprised of five chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the current literature on "at-risk" and criminalized young women. It first outlines the extent and nature of young women's involvement in criminalized behaviours, followed by a discussion of the common themes found within the lives of these young women. In addition, the elements of gender-specific programming are presented along with both sides of the gender-specific debate, which currently surrounds programming for young women.

In chapter two, I provide an overview of how criminalized young women have been theorized, briefly outlining tenets of earlier theories and concluding the chapter with a discussion on the various feminist perspectives within criminology that led to the

development of the conceptual framework used in the analysis of this study: the feminist perspectives on female delinquency as outlined by Chesney-Lind, Joanne Belknap, and Kristi Holsinger. Chesney-Lind's (1989; 1997) research draws attention to the unique experiences of young women, such as their persistent and high rates of sexual violence, as well as how patriarchal arrangements, and its intersections with other structural forces such as racism and poverty, affects both their delinquency and their conformity. Specifically, Belknap and Holsinger's (2008) work emphasizes how young women's "pathways to offending" differ from that of young men's. Namely, they identify a common pattern of female offending that begins with their victimization, which is usually perpetrated by family, and results in them engaging in a sequence of behaviours, such as running away, alcohol use, drug use, and/or sex work. Belknap and Holsinger argue that young women engage in many of these behaviours in order to survive while on the streets; however, they note that anywhere in this sequence of behaviours young women may be criminalized. All three authors emphasize the important role that the youth justice system plays in the criminalization of young women's survival strategies.

In addition, feminist perspectives also influence the language used throughout this thesis, namely the use of the terms "at-risk" and "criminalized". Scholars criticize the concept of "at-risk" arguing it is used to engender the mistrust of youth, rendering them a dangerous segment and therefore in need of managing (Kelly, 2003). In contrast, this study utilizes the concepts of "at-risk" and "criminalized" to problematize the structural context in which many young women are situated, that creates the conditions that put them at an increased risk of criminalization. For instance, this study examines the role community-based services play in addressing the conditions that put young women "at risk" of engaging in behaviours that are criminalized. Hence, this thesis uses the concepts of "at-risk" and

“criminalized” to relocate the problems and the solutions away from focusing on the individual and towards systemic issues, such as how the practices found in the youth justice system and its allied agencies affects the criminalization of young women and are structured by young women’s gender, race, and class.

In chapter three, I review the methodology employed in the course of this research identifying the research approach, the data collection, the research process and procedures, ethical considerations, a brief description of the research participants, and a description of the data analysis. In order to explore whether programming efforts for young women reflect their experiences, I conducted seven semi-structured interviews with youth service providers from various community-based agencies in Ottawa, Canada who work with “at-risk” and/or criminalized young women. In addition, I address the limitations of this study in this chapter.

In chapter four and five, I present the main research findings derived from my interviews with these community-based youth service providers. In chapter four I present the participants’ perceptions of the experiences of “at-risk” young women; and in chapter five I discuss the types of services the participants offered to “at-risk” young women, the challenges to delivering services that the participants identified, and recommendations for improving services that the participants suggested.

Lastly, this thesis concludes with a brief discussion of the research findings, and suggestions as to possible avenues for future research and programming.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

On November 8, 2007, a judge sentence a 14-year-old young woman from Medicine Hat, Alberta to ten years incarceration after being found guilty of killing her parents and brother. According to CTV news, she is Canada's youngest convicted multiple murderer being only 12 years old at the time of the murders (CTV News Staff, 2007). While on the east coast of Canada, another incident of violence that made the news involved a case where police charged three female teenagers for assault against another female youth in which the victim sustained cigarette burns on her ears and tongue, was beaten unconscious, and then revived by more violence (CBC News, 2007). On March 20, 2009, a judge found a 17-year-old girl guilty of first-degree murder for the death of another female youth (CBC News, 2009). Such cases of violence involving young women have resulted in news headlines declaring that "Girl violence [is] getting more lethal 'Sugar and spice' stereotype misguided, say experts" (Proudfoot, 2009). Notwithstanding the serious nature of these incidences, these high profile news reports present the very rare cases where young women commit serious acts of violence, which fails to portray the actual reality of their most common offending behaviours. Instead, such representations by the media are used to incite the severity of the public's reaction creating what Stanley Cohen (1980) refers to as a "moral panic" (as cited in DeKeseredy, 2000) whereby young women in conflict with the law are rendered a threat to society.

In order to understand the criminalization of young women, it is important to examine the types of behaviours for which they are criminalized, the responses they illicit from youth justice officials, and the types of interventions that are available for this group.

This chapter begins with an overview of the extent and nature of crimes committed by young women. Next, the common characteristics or experiences of criminalized young women will be examined, followed by a review of the youth justice system's responses to their behaviour. A discussion of recent research on the gender differences and females' gendered "pathways" to delinquency and violence will be presented. The chapter concludes by examining the issue of gender-specific programming for young women.

The Extent & Nature of Young Women's Crimes

Based on the above news headlines, it would appear to the general public that young women are offending violently at an alarmingly high rate. However, such perceptions would not reflect the reality of the extent and nature to which young women offend. In a recent report on female offenders in Canada, it was found that the rate at which females aged 12 and older have been charged by police for *Criminal Code* offences has decreased 28% since peaking in 1992 at 929 per 100,000 females compared to a rate of 666 per 100,00 females in 2005 (Kong & AuCoin, 2008). Similar decreases have also appeared within the male population, reflecting the overall trends in the national crime rate. Since the inurement of the Youth Criminal Justice Act (2002), the rate at which youths are charged for *Criminal Code* offences has decreased; however, this decrease was more pronounced for female youths (-31%) than for male youths (-25%). This difference largely reflects the types of crime each groups generally commits, with young women more likely to commit minor, non-violent offences resulting in them being more likely to be diverted away from the court processes under the YCJA (Taylor-Butts & Bressan, 2008).

Consistent with traditional crime statistics, the overall rate of female youths engaging in criminal activities remains substantially lower than male youths. In 2006, male youths

continue to make up the majority (77%) of youth charged with a criminal offence with males being charged at a rate of three times that of female youths (4,285 per 100,000 males compared to 1,366 females) (Taylor-Butts & Bressan, 2008). Similar arrest figures from the United States of America also reflect the considerable gender differences in official delinquency. In 2000, arrests of male youths far outweighed the number for female youths arrest by more than a 2:1 ratio (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). A self-report study also found these sex differences in offending patterns when examining the delinquent behaviour in a Canadian sample of female and male youths aged 12 to 15 years old. Based on data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), females aged 12 to 15 years report lower rates of delinquency than do males for both property-related and violent acts (Fitzgerald, 2003).

In addition to there being a large disparity between the rate at which male youths and female youths engaged in criminal activity, the nature of the criminal acts also differs greatly between the two groups. The three most common types of offences females were accused of were: (1) property crimes (47%), which consist predominantly of shoplifting; (2) violations against the person (28%) with level one, or common assault, things such as pushing, slapping, and punching being the most common; and (3) offences against the administration of justice (17%) which includes the failure to appear, breach of probation, being unlawfully at large and bail violations (Kong & AuCoin, 2008).

Females are more likely than males to come into contact with police for property crimes than for other types of crime. Yet, they are less likely than male youths to engage in serious property-related offences, such as theft of a motor vehicle. Rather, the proportion of female youths charged with minor theft of \$5, 000 and under was nearly twice that of young males (Taylor-Butts & Bressan, 2008). Compared to males, females were much more likely

to commit theft by shoplifting which made up two-thirds (66%) of the theft incidents where for males it made up half (51%) (Kong & AuCoin, 2008).

Despite these facts, the perceived increase in females engaging in violence heightens public concern. Whilst, the majority of the violence that female youths commit falls under the offence category of assault level one (the least serious form of assault), the charge rate for assault (level one) rose from 88 to 299 per 100,000 population between 1986 and 1993 and continued upward until 2002 (Kong & AuCoin, 2008). Various researchers debate whether these increases in girls' "violence" actually reflect changes in their behaviour. Rather, researchers argue that such increases in young women's use of aggression may be due to changes in practices, such as the increased reporting of schoolyard fights and crackdowns on bullying behaviour (DeKeseredy, 2000). Researchers define bullying as "the abuse of power by one child over another through repeated aggressive behaviors" (Connelly, Pepler, Craig, & Taradash, 2000). However, the research in this particular area tends to include both direct forms of aggression (e.g. hitting, pushing, hair pulling etc.) and indirect, or relational, forms of aggression (e.g. gossiping, verbal abuse, name calling etc.) within their definition of bullying. Often, the focus is on girls' use of the relational type of aggression (Artz, 2004). Researchers argue that conflating direct and indirect forms of aggressive behaviour is problematic because this potentially widens the net for greater social control and scrutiny particularly of girls' behaviours (Chesney-Lind, Morash, & Irwin, 2007). Furthermore, Sprott and Doob (2003) argue that increases in minor assaults by young women may also reflect changes in policies, such as zero-tolerance school policies as opposed to actual changes in behaviour.

With regards to young women's involvement in more 'serious violent crimes'¹, while the rates have more than doubled since the mid-1980s growing from 60 per 100,000 to a rate of 132 per 100,000, it has been on a steady decrease since 2001. Females' rate of serious violent crimes also remains substantially lower than the rates found amongst their male counterparts (Kong & AuCoin, 2008). Li's (2007) study of homicides in Canada, for example, found that in 2006 there were 84 youths implicated in 54 homicides, 72 males and 12 females in (as cited in Taylor-Butts & Bressan, 2008). Official arrests rates found in the USA are also consistent with these offending patterns. Police data indicated that in 2000, males were more likely to be arrested for violent crimes and serious property offences with the male-to-female ratio for violent index crimes (homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault) about 5:1. Girls in contrast were more likely to be arrested for running away from home and prostitution (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004).

These differences in the nature and seriousness of offending behaviour concerning property-related and violent acts were also reflected in recent Canadian self-report studies on youthful delinquency. These studies found that female youths were more likely to report that they had committed less serious violent and property-related crimes than male youths, and that they were more likely than males to offend one time only (Fitzgerald, 2003; Savoie, 2007).

Young Women and Administrative Offences

When examining the phenomenon of delinquency and criminal activity amongst females, violations against the administration of justice are particularly important especially

¹ In Statistics Canada's report entitled *Female offenders in Canada* (Kong & AuCoin, 2008), 'serious violent crime' included violent offences that carry a maximum penalty of 10 years or more such as 1st and 2nd degree murder, manslaughter, attempted murder, sexual assault levels 1, 2 and 3, assaults levels 2 and 3, unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge of a firearm with intent, abduction of a person under 14 and robbery.

when trying to understand the types of behaviours for which young women are commonly criminalized. Briefly looking back under Canada's first youth crime legislation, The Juvenile Delinquency Act (JDA, 1908), "status offences", which were offences applied only to juveniles and included a wide range of behaviours such as running away, truancy from school, sexual immorality and incorrigibility, often played a major part in bringing young women into the juvenile justice system (Geller, 1987; Reitsma-Street, 1999). However, since the introduction of the Young Offenders Act (YOA, 1984), the current YCJA's predecessor, status offences have since been decriminalized whereby youths can only be charged with *Criminal Code* offences. Despite these legislative improvements for youths, Reitsma-Street (1999) argues that 'status offences' have since been reconstructed into "status-like" failure to comply offences which under the YOA included offences such as "escape custody", "breach of recognizance", and "failure to comply with an undertaking", "failure to appear in court", and "failure to comply with a disposition". She found that there was a greater propensity to criminalize young women for these types of offences compared to young men. These administrative offences accounted for over one-fourth of the charges laid against girls compared to one-fifth of the charges laid against boys. Reitsma-Street (1999) contends that youth justice policy has had a differential impact on male and female youth, sometimes resulting in discriminatory practices against females.

Presently under YCJA (2002), offences against the administration of justice continue to play a significant role in the criminalization of young women. As previously noted, they are the third most common offence for which females are charged and include offences, such as bail violations, breach of probation, and failure to appear in court. Despite the decrease in the overall rate of females charged offences in general, the rates for offences against the administration of justice are increasing. Among female youths, the rate rose from 61 to 236

per 100,000 population (Kong & AuCoin, 2008). Similar increases in these types of offences are also found for male youths; however, the increases are the largest amongst female youths. In addition, the conviction rates for these types of offences are high and offenders are frequently sentenced to custody (Kong & AuCoin, 2008). For example, Corrado, Odgers, and Cohen (2000) found that the majority of the young women incarcerated in British Columbia were serving time for relatively minor offences with “breaches of court order” comprising 44.8%, while property offences comprised of 23.8%, and violent offences comprised of 27% of the current charges. Artz, Nicholson, and Rodriguez (2005) argue that “breaches” reflect paternalistic measures to police young women who were found to be subversive.

Furthermore, US status offenses continue to play a more significant role in girls’ arrests than boys’ arrests. The status offenses of running away and violating curfew/loitering accounted for about 21 percent of all girls’ arrests in 2000, but only about 10 percent of boys’ arrests (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004).

Characteristics of Criminalized Young Women

The above section examined the extent of young women’s involvement in criminal activities, as well as the nature of their crimes. Next, we examine some of the common themes found within the lives of criminalized young women; namely violence, family dysfunction, institutionalization, drug and substance use, academic disruption and health concerns.

Violence and Abuse

One of the most salient themes within the literature on young criminalized women is the prevalence of various forms of violence and abuse this group experiences. In an American study conducted by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) on females involved the youth justice system in the four California counties, it was found that ninety-two percent of the 193 girls interviewed reported having experienced one or more form of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, often on multiple occasions (Acoca & Dedel, 1998). High levels of violence were also found in a Canadian sample of female young offenders incarcerated in the British Columbia youth justice system. It was found that of the 67 incarcerated young women interviewed, 67% of participants had experienced physical abuse at some point in their lives, while 52% of the young women reported being a survivor of sexual abuse (Corrado, Odgers, & Cohen, 2000).

In examining the impact of gender on youths' risk of victimization, Belknap and Holsinger's (2006) found that not only was there a confirmed prevalence of violence in the histories of incarcerated youths, but there were also distinct gender differences identified. Their study surveyed 444 (163 girls and 281 boys) incarcerated youths and found that for virtually every abuse variable (e.g. physical, verbal, emotional), girls reported experiencing significantly greater number of incidents of abuse. The gender difference was particularly strong for items measuring sexual abuse (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006).

The gendered nature of sexual violence is particularly important in that this type of abuse more persistently affects women. In 2005, a report entitled *Family Violence in Canada* found that girls under the age of 18 experienced rates of sexual assault that were almost four times higher than their male counterparts (Brzozowski, 2007). Specifically, for every 100,000 young women there were 320 victims of sexual assault, compared to a rate of

86 male victims for every 100,000 young men. It was also found that the rates of sexual assault against children committed by family members were over three times higher for female victims than for male victims (108 compared with 32 incidents per 100,000) (Brzozowski, 2007).

In addition to sexual violence being a highly gendered crime, feminist criminologists have noted the importance of such histories and this relationship to criminal involvement for young women. Chesney-Lind (1997) suggests that many young women that are running away from profound sexual abuse at home resort to crime in order to survive on the streets. In examining the history of sexual abuse amongst an adolescent runaway population, McCormack, Janus and Burgess' (1986) study collected data from 149 runaways (55 females and 89 males) from a shelter in Toronto, Canada. The researchers found that of the 55 females, 73% reported sexual abuse compared to 38% of the 89 males (McCormack, Janus, & Burgess, 1986). In their assessment of the relationship between sexual abuse and delinquent/criminal activities, they found evidence that sexually abused young women reported having had trouble with school officials and employers, have been in trouble with the law, have participated in acts of physical violence, and have experienced arrests at significantly greater proportions than nonabused young women (McCormack, Janus, & Burgess, 1986).

Similar findings were found in more recent studies done in the US. In a longitudinal study funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Goodkind, Ng and Sarri (2006) examined the characteristics and outcomes for "at-risk" and adjudicated young women in Wane County, Michigan and found that consistent with other research, their analyses indicate that young women who have survived sexual abuse generally have worse outcomes than do similarly situated young women who have not

experienced this kind of abuse. Of the 204 young women surveyed, girls who had experienced sexual abuse were significantly more likely to currently be in closed residential placement, to have been in foster care, to have a mother who had been incarcerated, to have ever been in special education, to be experiencing multiple school problems, to be depressed, and to have attempted suicide. They were also more likely to use substances including alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, other illegal drugs, and overall substance use (Goodkind, Ng, & Sarri, 2006). Likewise, Katz (2004) found that sexual abuse clearly predicted both White and minority females' involvement in crime and delinquency. Such findings have led many feminist researchers to identify victimization, especially sexual abuse, as the first step along young women's "pathways to offending" (Belknap & Holsinger, 1998).

Family Dysfunction/Fragmentation

Not only are many criminalized young women experiencing violence in their homes (Chesney-Lind, 1997), but their family lives are often fraught with other difficult issues resulting in family dysfunction and/or fragmentation. In a study that examined the perceptions of service providers within juvenile justice agencies (e.g. probation officers, judges, detention supervisors), the respondents indicated that the family is the primary risk factor that contributes significantly to girls' involvement in juvenile offending. Family issues that contribute to risk include conflicts and lack of communication within the family, parents who are ill-equipped or unprepared, and a range of problems presented by the parents themselves (Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002). In examining the experiences of aggressive girls in Canada, researchers found significant differences between the aggressive and nonaggressive groups on all of the family variables examined. Both the parents and children in the aggressive group indicated more family violence, less effective

parenting, more parent-child conflict, and more sibling conflict compared to parents and children in the nonaggressive group (Pepler & Sedighdeilami, 1998).

Such family conflicts increase young women's risk because they may react by running away, or such conflicts may result in them being kicked out of their home. In their interviews with incarcerated young women, Corrado, Odgers and Cohen (2000) found that the vast majority of young women had either left home on their own volition (87.8%), or were kicked out of their homes (57.4%) at a relatively young age (12 years old). Moreover, the researchers found that many of the young women they had interviewed had a family history of criminality in which 68.8% had reported that a member of their immediate or extended family had a criminal record.

In examining male and female youths' family circumstances, Belknap and Holsinger (2006) noted significant gender differences in youths' reports with regard to the issue of parental abandonment and desertion, where girls (56%) were significantly more likely than boys (45%) to report experiencing parental abandonment and desertion. The authors note that this finding suggests young women's status is often devalued whereby girls are viewed as less important, and thereby afforded less attention compared to the parenting of boys.

Furthermore, young women's families are often fragmented for various other reasons. Acoca and Dedel's NCCD (1998) study found that the families of girls within the juvenile justice system were fragmented as a result of the intergenerational incarceration of caretakers, but also by other issues such as poverty, violence, and death.

Institutionalization

Criminalized young women's experiences of residential institutions often begin at a very young age through child welfare placements. In Totten's (2000) study which examined

the needs of Canadian young women involved with the youth justice system, he found that almost all of the participants who were in custody had a history of multiple residential placements in child welfare facilities preceding their involvement with the youth justice system. Virtually all of the young women were unanimous in their condemnation of the child protection system, which, in their opinion, did more damage than good by subjecting them to a chaotic series of residential placements (Totten, 2000). The involvement of the child welfare system and the high degree of residential instability was also found in the Corrado, Odgers and Cohen's (2000) sample of incarcerated young women where 33.9% were wards of the state and the average number of places that they had lived in other than home was eleven.

With regards to incarceration, in 2004/2005 female youths accounted for 21% of all young persons admitted to remand and 16% of all sentenced custody admissions (Calverley, 2007). Researchers have noted that young women of colour are often disproportionately overrepresented in prison environments (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). In Canada, Aboriginal youths accounted for one in five admissions to correctional services while at the same time they only represented approximately 5% of the total youth population (Calverley, 2007). While both Aboriginal male and female youths are highly represented in correctional services, this was particularly true for Aboriginal female youths. In 2004/2005, female Aboriginal youths represented 35% of all female admissions to secure custody and 29% of all female admissions to open custody (Calverley, 2007). Nearly one-third of all females admitted to sentenced custody were Aboriginal. In Corrado, Odgers and Cohen's (2000) study, they also found that a disproportionate percentage of the incarcerated young women they interviewed belonged to an ethnic minority group (47.9%), with Aboriginal young women comprising 42.3% of the entire sample.

In examining the issue of the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in correctional institutions, La Prairie, Mun, Steinke, Bulter & McCue (1996) identified two main factors that are important for understanding this phenomenon. Firstly, more Aboriginal people fall into the socially and economically vulnerable and marginalized groups involved in the criminal justice system. Secondly, there is often an overreliance on the use of imprisonment (as cited in Artz, Nicholson, & Rodriguez, 2005).

Drug and Substance Use

Another important reoccurring issue in the lives of criminalized young women is that of substance and alcohol use. The NCCD data on incarcerated young women found clear correlations between victimization of women and girls and specific high-risk behaviours such as serious drug abuse (Acoca & Dedel, 1998). Corrado, Odgers, & Cohen (2000) also found the levels of drug use extremely high among the group of incarcerated young women they studied, with 55% reporting crack use, 49% reporting heroin use, and 65.7% indicating cocaine use. They found that the average age of the onset of drug use was 12 years old. In examining youth justice responses to addiction, the authors found that the girls who were frequent crack cocaine users were more likely to be charged with an administrative breach offence.

As previously discussed, criminalized young women experience high rates of violence and family conflict. Recent feminist research illustrates that young women find different ways to cope with such difficult life circumstances. Hutson and Myers (2006) interviewed incarcerated young women and found that this population identified drugs and alcohol as two of the many tools they utilized to cope with their painful life experiences. In addition to drugs and alcohol providing a temporary relief from their problems, such

substance use could also create further difficulties for young women in that drug use and drinking underage are illegal. Thus, their use of drugs and alcohol could lead to further criminalization.

Academic Disruption

Another nearly universal characteristic of girls in the juvenile justice system is a history of difficulties in school and a lack of academic success. Ninety-two percent of the incarcerated girls interviewed in the NCCD study reported between one and three school problems consisting of at least one expulsion or suspension, being held back a grade at least one time, and /or being placed in a special class for learning, behaviour, or other problems or needs. In addition, eighty-five percent of the young women had reported being suspended or expelled at least once (Acoca & Dedel, 1998).

In regards to youths' reports on their school experiences, Belknap and Holsinger (2006) found significant differences between male and female youths with regards to dropping out of school. From their sample, they found that girls (41%) were significantly more likely than boys (31%) to report dropping out of or quitting school. Girls were more than twice as likely than boys to report dropping out of or quitting school because they "could not keep up" (42% compared to 19%) and because they had "left home" (48% of girls compared to 23% of boys).

Physical and Mental Health Issues

The above difficult life circumstances faced by many of the young women involved in the youth justice system often negatively affects their overall health and wellbeing. Acoca and Dedel (1998) found that within the population of girls in the juvenile justice system that they interviewed, the vast majority (87%) reported experiencing one or more

serious health problems with over half receiving medical treatment at the time of the interview. Specifically, the young women's physical health issues consisted of asthma (39%), yeast infections (29%), and sexually transmitted diseases (27%). In addition, over one-quarter of the young women they interviewed had been pregnant one or more times (Acoca & Dedel, 1998).

Moreover, risks factors such as violence and family conflict often affects males and females differently. For instance, in Belknap and Holsinger's (2006) study, they surveyed 163 girls and 281 boys to assess the risk factors of delinquency and found that on items that measured mental health and self-esteem variables, girls reported a significantly higher likelihood of mental health problems. Girls (54%) were more likely than boys (46%) to report purposefully hurting or harming themselves. More specifically, girls were more than twice as likely as boys to indicate that they had cut or burned their bodies, and were twice as likely to think about or attempt committing suicide.

The above research on the experiences of criminalized young women have led many feminist criminologists to promote the move towards adopting not only a gender-based analysis of youth crime, but also advocating for the development and adoption of gender-specific programming for young women that is designed with the aforementioned issues in mind. This shift comes as a reaction to traditional mainstream approaches that dominate both delinquency theory and interventions developed by males for boys (Reitsma-Street, 1999). In Lipsey's (1992) meta-analysis consisting of 443 delinquency prevention program evaluations, 35% of the programs served *only* males and 42% served boys, while only 2% percent of delinquency programs served *only* girls, and 6% percent primarily served girls (as cited in Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). Despite the growing body of research indicating that there are distinct gender differences between males and females involved in the youth

justice system, prevention and intervention programs and services for youth do not reflect their gendered realities.

The Gender-Specific Debate

Towards the late 1990s in the US, there was increased federal support for efforts to address the issue of gender-specific services for young women. In a report commissioned by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) entitled *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming*, Greene, Peters & Associates (1998) defined such programming as follows:

Gender-specific programming refers to program models and services that comprehensively address the special needs of a targeted gender group, such as adolescent girls. Such programs foster positive gender identity development. Gender-specific programs recognize the risk factors most likely to impact the targeted gender group and the protective factors that can build resiliency and prevent delinquency (para. 2).

What Does Gender-Specific Programming for Young Women Entail?

While there is a great effort made to draw attention to the need for gender-specific programming for young women involved in the criminal justice system, Kempt-Leonard and Sample (2000) argue that proponents of gender-specific programming fail to explain how it necessarily differs from effective services that are available for youths in general. They also assert that gender-specific recommendations are often vague, whereby its proponents fail to provide the details of what is needed to design and operate an effective gender-specific program. However, proponents of gender-specific programming emphasize that it differs from traditional services for youths in that it considers and addresses the unique experiences of young women (Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002; Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 2004). As discussed previously, “at-risk” and criminalized young women often

experience significant levels of violence, especially sexual violence, yet few programming efforts specifically address such victimization (Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002). As such, programs and services for young women should address the physical and sexual abuse in girls' lives (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998).

In addition, many other particular elements are noted as important to incorporate into gender-specific programming for young women. Since young women's victimization is often tied to their families, programming for girls addresses family problems and conflict. Also, such histories of violence and trauma result in many young women experiencing issues with depression, self-image, polydrug use as a means to self-medicate and attempted suicide. Instead of pathologizing young women with these issues, gender-specific programming links these behaviours with their histories of sexual and physical abuse. In addition, since running away from home is also a major coping strategy employed by young women living in violent homes, Chesney-Lind and Shelden (2004) note that any successful program for girls must address their need for safe housing. However, Goodkind (2005) finds that this heavy emphasis on girls' victimization and its impact on later delinquency and crime tends to ignore girls' agency. Chesney-Lind (1997) disagrees and argues that acknowledging the prevalence of victimization in the lives of girls' and women gives them the opportunity to speak to those experiences and sheds light on the context within which that person makes "choices" (p. 31).

Other important risks that programming for young women should address include: pregnancy and motherhood, poverty, poor academic performance, health and mental health concerns (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998). Overall, gender-specific services for girls would have multiple components that address the complex

issues that adolescent girls face, all of which must be delivered in a culturally appropriate manner (Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002). Therefore, gender-specific programming is comprehensive by dealing with behaviour in context, addressing each young woman's needs, and examining how risk factors have shaped each young women's development (Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998).

In addition to addressing the above experiences of young women, gender-specific programming also emphasizes incorporating the following elements into the design. First, research has shown that girls, more so than boys, place a high degree of importance on relationships (Gilligan, 1982). As such, Chesney-Lind and Shelden (2004) note that programs for young women should adopt a relational approach that emphasizes trust building with positive female role mentors. Meeting the needs of girls and young women requires that staff are trained in the following areas: relationship and communication skills, gender differences in delinquency, substance abuse education, the role of the abuse, the developmental stages of female adolescence (Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002). Thus, such training provides girls access to a broad network of adult mentors and peer counsellors sensitive to the girls-specific issues and problems (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). These programs should be small enough to ensure that young women have the opportunity to develop one-on-one relationships (Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002). Gender-specific strategies service providers can employ in their work with young women include: Providing information to girls to help them understand the consequences of high risk behaviour and make healthier life choices, assisting girls in developing problem solving, negotiation, anger and stress management, and decision making skills (Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998). However, such strategies are problematic and limited because they emphasize a "cognitive-behavioural" approach in that they seek to

modify individual's behaviours without seeking to change the conditions in which that individual finds herself. As such, these strategies fail to take into account the broader structures that constrain marginalized young women's choices.

Second, gender-specific programming should be designed with young women's emotional and physical safety needs in mind. Proponents of gender-specific programming for girls note the importance of providing them with women only, safe spaces where they can begin to develop trust with services providers (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). As mentioned previously, most programs for "at-risk" young women are gender neutral where boys and girls are put together in the same programs. In order to discuss issues related to sexism, such as sexual violence, and safety Chesney-Lind & Shelden (2004) recommend that young women should be provided the opportunity to have a separate women only space to discuss their experiences. Third, programming efforts should seek to empower young women. In order to empower young women, programs need to focus on girls' strengths and skills instead of always viewing and treating them as if they are in need of "fixing" (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). Furthermore, young women are in the best position to identify what issues they are experiencing and need assistance with, and their input would be incredibly valuable in programming efforts geared specifically for them. Thus, they should be provided opportunities to aid in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs that are geared for their benefit (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004).

Fourth, gender-specific programming seeks to connect young women with their communities. Greene, Peters and Associates (1998) suggest utilizing community resources by mobilizing community and professional assistance to expand the network of support for young women. Young women should be afforded opportunities that help them to integrate

with their communities by providing linkages and referrals to community-based programs (Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002; Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998).

Lastly, gender-specific programming acknowledges the structural forces impacting young women's experiences. Traditional programming efforts aimed at young women are usually based on micro-level understandings and explanations, often attributing their criminality primarily to individual level factors that pathologize them. Rather, proponents of gender-specific programming base their understandings of female delinquency on feminist perspectives noting how young women's experiences and reactions are often impacted by their position in a patriarchal society (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). Moreover, few programs address the special problems that girls of colour experience; gender-specific programming is theoretically informed by feminist perspectives, which are based on the experiences of the young women themselves, and adopts macro-level explanations that connect girls' delinquency to structural societal issues such as sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). Thus, gender-specific programming seeks to be sensitive to issues of race and class since the problems and issues faced by girls are often interrelated and complex (Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998).

Unfortunately, programs that are specifically designed for young women continue to remain few and far between. In a study conducted by the FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children in British Columbia, researchers found, based on the focus group discussions and interviews they conducted with 38 service providers, that there was a lack of services for marginalized girls (Janovicek, 2001). The study found that traditional services for girls fail to take into account power relations which impact young women. Traditional programs also adopt a "quick fix" approach by expecting girls to

demonstrate positive changes in a few weeks, as well as failing to respect girls' ability to make decisions about their own life. Furthermore, there was a lack of services for girls who are in violent relationships. For these reasons, the service providers that participated in that research study found that programs currently set girls up for failure, which makes them more vulnerable to violence since they believe that they have failed yet again (Janovicek, 2001). Moreover, Artz (1998) found that programs specifically concerned with violence prevention are typically gender neutral and operate under the assumption that "one size fits all" (p. 196) which fails to take into account the male-female differences when examining participation and diversion from violence.

Proponents of gender-specific programming have identified various barriers to the widespread development and implementation of services that meets the needs of young women. First, the small numbers of females (proportionately to males) often causes difficulty in developing programs (Bloom, Owen, Deschenes, & Rosenbaum, 2002) resulting in the needs of girls either being short changed or simply ignored in programming efforts (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). Lack of funding to programs and services for girls and young women was identified as the most serious barrier confronted by programs (Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002). Of the few programs that do exist for girls, they often rely on short-term funding (Janovicek, 2001). Thus, until governments commit resources to this group and provide long-term funding, programs targeted for girls face great difficulties in sustaining their services and meeting the needs of young women.

In addition to there being a "paucity of services targeting female juvenile offenders" (Acoca, 1999), of the few programs that do exist, even fewer have been evaluated. In their critique of gender-specific programming, Kempf-Leonard & Sample (2000) contend that there has not been enough research proving the effectiveness of such gender-specific

programming with girls, meaning that responses to improve the situation for girls within the youth justice system are likely to fail. However, two national surveys done in the US (one conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and another as part of the 1998 National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) study) indicated that there are promising and effective gender-specific programs; although, there are only a relatively small number of such programs nationwide (Acoca & Dedel, 1998; Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998). In Canada, the literature on successful gender-specific programming is even smaller and consists primarily of a few qualitative reports (Totten, 2000).

Besides there being a lack of services that address the gendered experiences of young women, other factors also prove to be barriers for young women trying to access services to meet their needs. It was found that girls and young women confront many individual barriers in seeking help. For example, distrust and fear, lack of knowledge about services, teen attitudes and resistance, lack of personal contact with staff, transportation, and lack of service accessibility, domestic responsibility, difficulty in making and accessing referrals, and cultural and immigration issues (Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002). Thus, structural as well as individual barriers make it difficult for young women to access services and support, further complicating their often difficult life circumstances.

Building Young Women's Resiliency

As outlined in the empirical research presented in this chapter, issues such as experiences of violence, family dysfunction and fragmentation, poverty and substance abuse greatly increase young women's risk of coming into conflict with the law. However,

researchers also note various “protective” factors that help young women avoid becoming involved in criminalized behaviours despite their exposure to these risks.

While negative family dynamics increase young women’s risk, a positive family relationship plays a significant role in protecting them from engaging in risky behaviours. Research has noted that young women with at least one strong bond with a family member who is caring and supportive were found to be less likely to engage in delinquent behaviour (Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998; Pepler & Sedighdeilami, 1998). Bonds with these family members helped to foster positive development in girls by providing nurturing home environments whereby clear limits are communicated to them.

In addition, while different types of abuse (e.g. sexual, physical, and emotional) contribute significantly to produce risky behaviours amongst young women, protective factors such as developing their self-image, self-esteem, and self-worth were found to mitigate against such negative experiences and build resiliency within them (Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002; Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998). Resiliency is the ability to avoid becoming involved in delinquent or problem behaviour despite a youth’s exposure to various risks factors. Moreover, schools and their communities were also found to be important protective factors within young women’s lives by creating opportunities for education, achievement, personal growth, and employment. This helps to develop their connectedness with the local community, assisting in their resiliency to becoming involved in aggressive and violent behaviours (Pepler & Sedighdeilami, 1998). Schools also provide an environment where young women can get health education, learn problem solving, and develop stronger communication skills (Greene, Peters, and Associates, 1998). Lastly, Reistma-Street (2004) urges the politicization of efforts to address criminalized young women by drawing attention to their rights and the resources that promote gender and racial

equity which could simply entail listening to what young women want and need. Thus, interventions that focus on young women's strengths can assist in building resiliency and reducing the deleterious effects of the difficult life circumstances that are often present in their lives.

Gaps in Research

As the above review of the literature indicates, young women's experiences were historically, and largely continue to be, ignored in the development and delivery of services for "at-risk" and criminalized young women. There is a growing recognition that the needs of young women involved in the criminal justice system are not met through the traditional services offered to them (Bloom, Owen, Deschesnes, & Rosenbaum, 2002; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Totten, 2000). As such, researchers advocate for the move towards youth justice providers offering gender-specific programming for young women who come into conflict with the law.

However, the equitable treatment of young women often begins at the policy level. In Reitsma-Street's (1999) review of the Canadian youth justice system, she argues that the lives of young women were not been satisfactorily addressed in Canadian youth justice policy or practice at the time the YOA (1984) was in effect to the point where she finds "justice for Canadian girls in the 1990s remains elusive" (p. 349). She notes the various problematic contradictions, such as discriminatory practices where young women were disproportionately charged and sentenced to custody for 'status-like' failure to comply offences, and the negative impacts this would have on young women. In order to address the various critical issues facing young women in conflict with the law, she recommends that a

gender-based analysis be conducted on the then proposed new Youth Criminal Justice Act.

According to the Status of Women Canada:

A gender-based analysis would examine how the assumptions, procedures, and impact of a policy or proposed statute has used, or has not used research on the experiences and circumstances of girls, and how a policy or proposal could reflect a more equitable and just approach for girls” (as cited in Reitsma-Street, 1999, p. 336).

While the current YCJA (2002) explicitly states that youth justice authorities and program providers “respect gender, ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences and respond to the needs of Aboriginal young persons and of young persons with special requirements” (S.3(1)(c)(iv); how this actually translates into practice is not specifically articulated.

Canadian research conducted at the time that the YOA was still in effect shows that young women’s experiences and needs were not being met within the youth justice system or programming efforts available. Such research studies included interviews, focus groups and/or surveys with incarcerated young women (Totten, 2000), community-based youth service providers (Janovicek, 2001), and youth criminal justice officials (Hannah-Moffat & Maurutto, 2003). However, little research has been conducted on the perceptions of community-based youth service providers during the current YCJA era.

In light of this gap, this research study seeks to explore the present situation of “at-risk” and criminalized young women and the various community-based programs available for them within the city of Ottawa, Canada. This study seeks to contribute knowledge to the growing research on young women in conflict with the law and the extent to which services and programming efforts reflect the material and lived realities of this group.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter examines the images of young women who are in conflict with law as they are portrayed through theory. Numerous criminological theories and frameworks attempt to explain why youths commit crimes, and typically address factors related to the “context, causation, motivation, and explanation for crime and delinquency” (Campbell, 2005, p. 2). However, until relatively recently, most of these earlier theories have been developed based on research primarily conducted on male youths (Reitsma-Street & Artz, 2000). Historically, young women’s crimes have largely been neglected, and their victimization “ignored, minimized, and trivialized” (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004, p. 1) in the field of criminology. When young women were theorized in the earlier criminological literature, it was often done in a sexist manner, where theorists based their explanations on stereotypical assumptions about females (Smart, 1976). As such, mainstream theories of delinquency have largely remained “malestream” (Cain, n.d., as cited in Gelsthorpe & Morris, 1988). Despite these criticisms, traditional criminological theories attempt to explain young women’s criminality, resulting in what Chesney-Lind (1988) describes as an “add-women-and stir” approach (as cited in Chesney-Lind, 2006) which she argues is inadequate in shedding light on this issue.

As the previous literature review illustrated, recent feminist research studies identified several reoccurring themes in the lives of criminalized young women (e.g. sexual and physical violence, family dysfunction and fragmentation etc.). Yet, traditional delinquency theories often fail to examine these experiences within a broader structural

context. As such, various feminist researchers have questioned the applicability of these traditional delinquency theories in explaining young women's crimes.

Moreover, feminist criminologists have been examining how structural factors pressure women and girls to conform and how the patterns of social control experienced by women are related to understandings about female crime (Heidensohn, 1995). Feminist research examines how the intersectionality of sexism, racism, and classism affect young women's experiences (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). However, in order to understand how 'sexism' occurs within the criminal justice system, the organizational factors within these agencies, such as the policies and the micro-politics, are also important points of analysis in theorizing as these factors influence the perceptions and practices of those practitioners who work with criminalized youths (Gelsthorpe, 1989).

However, before delving more deeply into how contemporary feminism theories understands how young women come into conflict with the law, it is important to conceptualize the history and of theorizing women's criminality. These perceptions of young women often affected how they were responded to by various social agencies. This chapter examines how different theorists constructed young women who come into conflict with the law by briefly exploring the explanations posited by the earlier classical theorists, moving on to the sociological theorists, and ending with the feminist theorists. Specifically, it is the feminist perspectives on female delinquency² that will be utilized to inform the analysis of this research study.

² For the purposes of this report, the term *delinquency* refers to all behaviours explicitly set out in the *Criminal Code* of Canada but engaged in by individuals aged 12 to 17 and will be used interchangeably with the concept of *youth crime*. Although the term delinquency within the historical theory section of this chapter actually incorporates both status offences (e.g. truancy, incorrigibility, running away etc.) and criminal offences.

Historical Images of Females: Atavistic, Deceitful, and Sexual

Biological Explanations

When women and girls ‘offended’, earlier theorists reasoned that it was due to their biological and physiological make-up. Lombroso and Ferrero’s *The Female Offender* (1895), was one of the first attempts made by researchers to examine female criminality. The authors’ concept of atavism to explain criminality posits that criminals have distinguishable physical anomalies that are reminiscent of humans at an earlier evolutionary stage.

Consistent throughout various periods, gender is the strongest correlate of crime, whereby males, with few exceptions (such as prostitution) are more likely to offend than females (Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002). According to Lombroso and Ferrero (1895), this sex discrepancy in crime rates between males and females was due to atavism arguing that females, being the more primitive of the two sexes, commit less crime than men because “... congenially they are less inclined to crime than men. Atavism must be held to account for this fact, savage females, and still more civilised females, being by nature less ferocious than males” (p. 110). They argued that women’s piety, maternal instincts, lack of passion, sexual coldness and their underdeveloped intelligence are what prevents “normal women” from becoming the criminal type. However, they found the minority of women who did constitute Lombroso’s typology of the *born criminal* were women that were exceptionally evil exhibiting what they called a “diabolical cruelty” (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1895, p. 148). The “born criminal” women were those whom Lombroso and Ferrero perceived as defying stereotypical notions of femininity both in physical appearance (i.e. muscular, broad jaw line

etc.) and in what was considered acceptable female behaviour (i.e. superior intelligence, lack of maternal instinct, sexual etc.).

Lombroso and Ferrero suggested that the majority of criminal women were more likely to fall into the typology of the *occasional criminal* but their physiological characteristics differed very little from that of “normal” women. Instead, they found that these women were led to crime because of “the suggestion of a third person or by irresistible temptation, and [they] are not entirely deficient in the moral sense” (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1895, p. 147).

Similarly, this theme of women’s inherent and unchecked “diabolical cruelty” as found in Lombroso and Ferrero’s (1895) work was also reflected in Otto Pollack’s *The Criminality of Women* (1961), in which he finds that women’s general deceitfulness makes them ideal criminals for they are better than males at avoiding detection. In addition, he found that women’s physiology of menstruation, pregnancy and menopause could lead to “psychological disturbances”, thus there are important factors to consider when trying to understanding the causes women’s criminality.

Moreover, Pollak argues that the above biological factors interact with various social factors, namely male chivalry, creating conditions that are ideal for female criminals for both avoiding detection and punishment. He maintains that male chivalry towards women by both law enforcement and their male victims results in the former’s tendency towards greater leniency for female offenders, and in the latter’s reluctance to bringing a complaint against a female perpetrator. As a result, women’s general deceitfulness combined with male chivalry was said to enhance women’s ability to remain undetected resulting in the masked criminality of women (Pollak, 1961). Thus, according to Pollak, the apparent sex discrepancy in crimes rates between the two sexes is actually inaccurate.

In addition to the focus on women's perceived evil nature, it is often young women's "sexuality" as opposed to their "criminality" (Geller, 1987) that is the primary emphasis in the earlier works. According to W.I Thomas (1923, 1969), girls' problem behaviour is attributed to their "depraved families" which are what he considers disorganized, economically disadvantaged, and unable to both regulate and gratify the wishes of its members. Thomas (1923, 1969) states that often the attainment of these wishes for young women is done through sex, since "[i]t is their capital" (p. 109). The solution he advances for "checking the beginnings of demoralization" (Thomas, 1923, 1969, p. 194) in girls is that of the youth courts since they are wiser than the parents.

Similarly, Cowie, Cowie, and Slater (1968) also observe that young women's "delinquency" often consists primarily of "sexual" delinquency. They contend that this was the result of female delinquents' lower intelligence and psychiatric disturbances. While they note the unfavourable environmental factors in these girls' lives, the authors predominately seek biological explanations and solutions and propose that "[t]he problems of delinquency should be tackled, if possible, in the first place by prophylaxis[,] [e]ven more in the case of girls than boys" (Cowie, Cowie, & Slater, 1968, p. 178). Thus, the solution they put forth for dealing with female "delinquency" remains at the level of the individual and focuses on pathologizing and medicating these young women.

Likewise, in *The Adolescent Girl in Conflict* (1966), Konopka notes that "most delinquent girls have some problems in relation to sex" (p. 19) and continues the theme of biological explanations, such as girls' "unique dramatic biological onset of puberty" and "the complex identification process" (namely the mother-daughter conflict) to explain girls' "criminal" behaviours (Konopka, 1966, p. 119). While she adopts a more empathic approach to understanding female delinquents, she still tends to focus on girls' biology and

sexuality when explaining the reasons that lead to their delinquency. In addition, Konopka's work, similar to Thomas' (1923, 1969), reflected another theme found throughout this body of literature: that with the right treatment or interventions, young women can be "saved" (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004); Konopka promotes the use of self-help groups and sensitive youth counsellors.

Lombroso and Ferrero (1895) were two of the first researchers to focus on female criminality, but their explanations are largely discredited. First, their work is criticized for their acceptance of assumptions of femininity and their failure to submit these assumptions to any kind of systematic enquiry (Heidensohn, 1995). Second, their focus on individual biological factors resulted in their failure to contextualize women's behaviour within the social, economic, cultural and historical milieu which they are situated (Smart, 1976). Despite such criticisms, their work forged how criminalized young women were understood and greatly impacted subsequent research in the area of female crime. Chesney-Lind and Shelden (2004) found that their preoccupation with women's sexuality as an explanation of for young women's criminal behaviour greatly influenced later theorists of female delinquency and criminality as this theme is found throughout many of these earlier theorists' works too. According to these earlier theorists, the problem of girls' delinquency is the result of biological and physiological factors peculiar to women; the solutions focus primarily on changing the individual female.

Sociological Explanations

Moving away from focusing on individual pathology, sociological theories attempt to seek out the causes of delinquency by discerning what aspects of the environment affect youths' behaviour. However, many of the earlier sociological theories remained quite

positivist (Campbell, 2005). The following section briefly explores sociological theorists that discuss, albeit very briefly, female delinquency. These following theorists draw attention to the differences between males and females which they acknowledge are the result of culturally established sex roles.

In *Delinquent Boys* (1955), Albert Cohen maintains that males are more likely to resort to delinquency than females because the delinquent response is well within the range of responses that do not threaten masculinity. However, consistent with early theories, early sociological theorists continued to view young women's crimes as "sexual" as opposed to "criminal". According to Cohen, sexual delinquency for young women provides a means of achieving the female sex role goal of establishing relationships with the opposite sex (Cohen, 1955). Similarly, in *Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency* (1958), Miller contends that "Getting into trouble" and "staying out of trouble" represent major issues for both males and females; however, for young males "trouble" involves fighting or pursuing sexual adventures, while for young women, "trouble" entails sexual involvement with disadvantageous consequences.

Conversely, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) posit that access to illegitimate roles, similar to access to legitimate roles, is limited by both social and psychological factors resulting in differential opportunity structures. As such, they argue that females are less likely to be involved in delinquent subcultures because they are usually (but not exclusively) associated with the male sex role. Widespread delinquency by the lower class youth is their mode of adaptation to the structured strains and inconsistencies with the social order. The authors find, however, these strains affect men more than women since it is primarily men who must enter the workforce, develop a career, and support a family (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960).

Similar to many theorists before them, these three scholars developed their theories based on young men and primarily focused their inquiry on male delinquency. They often only mentioned young women's delinquency as a side note and based their understandings of young women's behaviours on the prevailing stereotypical assumptions about women's roles. While Steffensmeier and Allan (1996) maintain that these traditional gender-neutral theories provide reasonable explanations of less serious forms of criminality, Chesney-Lind (1997) argues that delinquency theory has all but ignored young women and the problems and issues they face. As a result, few attempts have been made to understand the meaning of girls' arrest patterns and the relationship between these arrests and the very real problems that these arrests masks.

Labelling Theory

Moving away from why a person commits a deviant act, labelling theory instead examines the response to the act. In examining how women become labelled as "deviant", Schur argues that two themes are central to the analysis of women's deviance: stigmatization and social power. First, women's vulnerability to stigmatization rests on their general social subordination, their relatively poor power position (Schur, 1984). Second, definitions of deviance operate to impose control. For example, he argues that female delinquents are, almost by definition, sexual delinquents as a result of paternalistic efforts to "protect" female youths which, however well intended, are in fact stigmatizing and punishing. Schur (1984) argues that "... until women collectively have acquired an equal share in the power to develop and impose labels, the controlling of women through an imputation of spoiled identity will persist" (p. 235).

Labelling theory has had major implications in both how youth who come into conflict with the law are dealt with in social policy, as well as in the development of community-based sanctions that are perceived to be less stigmatizing than incarceration (Campbell, 2005).

While Schur acknowledges how women's subordinate position subjects them to a wide array of stigmatizing labels, labelling theory is criticised for failing to examine the relationship of labelling with the social, political, and economic structures within society (Campbell, 2005).

Feminist Frameworks Within Criminology

The aforementioned theories of female criminality were often based on commonly accepted assumptions about femininity and masculinity and often resulted in "the disregard and misrepresentation of gender and women in criminological theory" (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 1995, p. 549). Critical perspectives challenge and reject these traditional approaches by moving the focus of theorizing away from single, simple causes (e.g. biology, sex roles) and instead placing the attention towards power relationships and issues of social control (Campbell, 2005). A critical feminist perspective can be broadly defined as "a set of theories about women's oppression *and* a set of strategies for social change" (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988). This next section will briefly explore the various strands of feminism found in the criminological literature, in order to contextualize the development of current feminist theorizing of female delinquency.

Various feminist perspectives exist and each are based on different assumptions regarding the causes of gender inequality. The five major strains of feminist theory which will be discussed in this section are liberal, radical, Marxist, socialist, and postmodernist feminism. Under *liberal feminism*, the cause of gender inequality is the customary and legal

constraints which have blocked women's access to equality in education and employment and other activities in the "public sphere" (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988). The subordinated position of women results mainly from the way males and females are socialized into gender roles. Strategies for social change would require the removal of all obstacles to women's access to education, paid employment, political activity and other public social institutions so that women can participate equally in the public sphere with men (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988).

With the women's movement, there were more educational and occupational opportunities available for women; however, it was also argued that this would increase women's opportunity to participate in criminal activities. For example, in Freda Adler's highly popular and controversial book *Sisters in Crime* (1975), she argues that the emancipation of women disrupted traditional gender roles resulting in girls engaging more in what is typically perceived as masculine behaviour such as drinking, stealing, gang activity and fighting. Thus, it was not female's "nature" that inhibited them from engaging in criminal activities, but rather their lack of opportunities in the criminal sphere.

However, the emancipation argument was critiqued and refuted for various reasons. Researchers found serious methodological issues with Adler's research. For instance, increases in female arrest rates were exaggerated because the number of females arrested in her sample were so low to begin with that any increases translated into large percentages (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). Also, Curran and Renzetti found that Adler's study failed to control for the major differences of the absolute base numbers when she compared arrest rates for men and women and calculated increases, thus exaggerating the rate changes in women's arrests rates (as cited in DeKeseredy, 2000). In addition, several studies that attempted to test this link between women's liberation and female crime did not find a strong

positive relationship between these two factors (see James & Thornton, 1980; Cernkovich & Giordano, 1979).

Furthermore, Smart (1976) finds that this argument fails to situate the discussion of the sex roles within a structural explanation of the social origins of those roles, neglects to examine the meaning of violence or the acts that are defined as violent, and ignores the other structural changes taking place in the lives of women and girls. As such, Smart (1976) argues that this emancipation argument reflects traditional theorizing of the phenomenon of female criminality by resorting to single, simple causal relationships. Despite these criticisms of Adler's emancipation argument, her work and that of other researchers working within this framework of liberal feminism have been successful in bringing the issue of women's crime to the attention of criminologists.

Radical feminism challenged liberal feminism for being too simplistic; arguing that liberal feminism only addresses the "equal opportunity" of *some* women, and fails to address the overall unequal relations between men and women (Messerschmidt, 1986). As such, radical feminism locates the causes of gender inequality and women's oppression to patriarchy whereby social relations are organized in such a way that individual men and men as a group seek to control women's sexuality and reproductive potential. Under radical feminism, it is argued that men control women through psychological, economic, sexual, and physical abuse and manipulation and focuses heavily on the victimization of women and male violence against women. Moreover, radical feminism brought attention to women's bodies and their voices. Strategies for social change under radical feminism include overthrowing patriarchal relations (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988).

While radical feminists have contributed to criminology by drawing attention to the issue of male violence against women, it is also heavily criticised. Messerschmidt (1986)

suggests radical feminism assumes a universal patriarchy; however, throughout history, while there have been sex divisions of labour throughout different societies, there is not a systematic and institutionalized masculine control over the labour power and sexuality of women. Similarly, radical feminism has been constructed as perpetrating biological determinism, in which it assumes men are destined to be harmful, aggressive, and controlling (Lanier & Henry, 1998).

Similar to radical feminism, *Marxist feminism* locates the causes of gender inequality to the hierarchical relationships set up in society; however, it is class relations which are primary and gender relations secondary (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988). Marxist feminists believe that the abolition of a class society, where the means of production are shared and wealth is not owned by a few, will liberate women because they will not be economically dependent on men. Marxist feminists find that women's oppression is due to the political, economic, and social structures of capitalism. Feminists subscribing to this perspective are most concerned with work-related inequities and have advanced understandings of the trivialization of women's work in the home and the poorly paid jobs women have predominately occupied (Belknap, 1996). Marxist feminism has been criticised for prioritizing class relations over gender relations (Lanier & Henry, 1998).

As such, *socialist feminism* seeks to combine features of both Marxist and radical feminist perspectives. However, instead of viewing one oppression as more important than the other, socialist feminists purport that it is the interaction of gender and class which creates positions of power and powerlessness in the gender/class hierarchy (Messerschmidt, 1986). Messerschmidt (1986) argues that it is under *patriarchal capitalism* that criminality can be understood, for it is this interaction that results in different types and degrees of criminality and varying opportunities for engaging in them. Strategies for social change

under socialist feminism includes transforming patriarchal and capitalist class relations “...since the oppression of women and of the working class is intimately related through the interaction of production and reproduction, the material base of society *as a whole* needs to be transformed to end that oppression” (Messerschmidt, 1986, p. 31).

In general, core elements of feminist perspectives have been identified as being anti-positivist, critical of stereotypical images of women, and women centred (Gelsthorpe & Morris, 1988). Feminist analyses draw from these theories to problematize gender and to consider the implications of research in order to empower women or foster change in gender relations (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988, p.505).

Daly and Maher (1998) categorize these above theories as representing the first or earlier phase of feminist theorizing. *Postmodern feminism*, for example, represents the second or more recent phase of feminist inquiry that began in the late 1980s. What differentiates feminist postmodernism from traditional criminological theories and other feminist theories is that it does not attempt to solve problems. Instead of seeking to provide a “feminist truth”, this strain of feminism focuses on “the deconstruction of truth and analysis of the power effects which claims to truth entail” (Smart, 1990, p. 82). Also, postmodern feminism rejects the term *women* as a unified category, acknowledges that *women’s experiences* are, in part, constructed by legal and criminological discourses, and revisits the relationship between sex and gender (Daly & Maher, 1998).

As for feminist contributions to criminology, postmodern feminist Carol Smart (1990) argues that the “core enterprise of criminology is problematic” (p. 70). For instance, criminology focuses primarily on ‘offenders’ and the *causes* behind their criminality. As such, Smart (1990) finds mainstream criminological theories to remain quite positivistic in

nature in that they are based on the assumption that once the causal explanations are established, this will lead to objective methods of interventions.

Daly and Maher (1998) note that within this second phase there are two trajectories of feminist scholarship: the first is where theorists focus on the “real women” of feminist social science, whereas the second is more concerned with “women of discourse”. They use the term *real women* and *women of discourse* as a means to distinguish and reflect on the two ways of theorizing about women in the social world. They find that the theorists that focus on “real women” explore women as agents in constructing their life worlds, including their lawbreaking and victimization. Whereas theorists of the “women of discourse” position explore how women are constructed within criminal law, medicine and criminology discourses (Daly & Maher, 1998). Daly and Maher note that while these foci are not incompatible, they reflect the differences in the intellectual positions that scholars take toward their subjects. Thus, feminist theorizing has led to major changes on how knowledge about women is produced as illustrated through the development of feminist epistemologies.

Harding (1986) examines three feminist epistemologies each of which provides “an alternative to the dominant epistemologies developed to justify science’s modes of knowledge-seeking and ways of being in the world” (Harding, 1986, p. 24). Each feminist epistemology attempts to address some of the feminist critiques of traditional science. The first response is that of *feminist empiricism* which argues that what has passed as science has been imbued with sexism and androcentrism by traditionally excluding women and the interests of women. Within this feminist response, it argues that truly objective science would take into account both genders. While considered the least threatening to the established order, since it only critiques empirical practice but accepts empiricism, feminist

empiricism has facilitated the increase of female researchers and the study of female offenders.

The second response that Harding (1986) describes is that of *feminist standpoint* which argues that men's dominating position in social life results in partial and perverse understandings, whereas women's subjugated position provides the possibility to more complete and less perverse understandings. Whereas the third response of *feminist postmodernism* challenges the assumptions upon which feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint are based. This approach does not view individual women as having unitary selves, but rather fractured subjectivities. Under feminist postmodernism, there is a move away from treating knowledge as the ultimate objective and hence able to reveal the concealed truth towards recognizing that "knowledge is part of power and that power is ubiquitous" (Smart, 1990, p. 82). The policy implications of postmodernism do not involve changing individuals, institutions or structures, but rather they involve changing our discourses to less harmful ones (Lanier & Henry, 1998).

The following section specifically outlines the current situation of feminist perspectives within theorizing about young women's criminalization.

No Longer "Too Few to Count"³

Building on earlier and contemporary feminist works, scholars researching women's criminality propose that delinquency theory should incorporate the various elements identified within the aforementioned feminist perspectives into theorizing about young women's criminality. As illustrated in the previous chapter, the past few decades witnessed a growth in the research conducted on at-risk and criminalized women and girls. It is from

³ Phrase borrowed from the title of Adelberg & Currie's (1987) book *Too Few to Count*.

these empirical studies that researchers began to notice common themes in the lives of young women. Chesney-Lind (1989) argues that “The failure to consider the existing empirical evidence on girls’ lives and behaviour can quickly lead to stereotypical thinking and theoretical dead ends” (p. 21). As such, various feminist theorists researching at-risk and criminalized young women propose that theories used to explain youth crime take into account young women’s unique realities. In addition, this would also entail raising questions on how gender organizes criminology and sociolegal studies (Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 2004).

The next section specifically discusses the theoretical framework that guides this research study and consists of the emerging feminist perspectives found within the literature on female delinquency namely the writings of Meda Chesney-Lind, Joanne Belknap, and Kristi Holsinger.

Women’s Experiences

This study examines the gendered nature of youth justice with regards to young women. As discussed in the previous chapter, the growth in empirical research on criminalized young women has led researchers to note that their routes to crime differ from their male counterparts. Belknap and Holsinger (1998) contend that “...the most significant and potentially useful criminological research in recent years has been the recognition of girls’ and women’s pathways to offending” (p. 4). Young women’s lives and behaviours are often shaped by their status as young women. As such, Chesney-Lind (1989) proposes that a feminist model of female delinquency would examine the role played by patriarchal arrangements in adolescents’ delinquency and conformity. Renzetti and Curran (1999) define patriarchy as:

...a sex/gender system in which men dominate women and what is considered masculine is more highly valued than what is considered feminine. Patriarchy is a system of social stratification, which means that it uses a wide array of social control policies and practices to ratify male power and to keep girls and women subordinate to men

(as cited in Chesney-Lind, 2006, p. 9).

Accordingly, feminist analyses examine how patriarchal arrangements are used to police young women whose behaviours are perceived to transgress what is considered acceptable behaviour (Chesney-Lind, Morash, & Irwin, 2008; Reitsma-Street & Artz, 2000). For example, feminist analyses of female youth crime have examined the significant role that status offences or Canadian 'status-like' administrative offences have in bringing young women to the attention of the criminal justice system (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Reitsma-Street, 1999).

In addition, the proposed feminist theory of delinquency would take into account girls' victimization and the relationship between that experience and girls' official delinquency (Belknap & Holsinger, 1998; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). As illustrated in the previous chapter, criminalized young women experience high rates of violence, specifically physical and sexual (Acoca & Dedel, 1998; Corrado, Odgers, & Cohen, 2000).

Researchers have noted that there are several implications for the sexual and physical abuse experienced by young women. Belknap and Holsinger (1998) argue that victimization is the first step on young women's "pathways to offending". Young women who experience serious and persistent abuse and/or neglect, for instance, may actively resist by attempting to escape their abusive and/or neglectful home environment (Holsinger, 2000). Running away often results in young women developing a lifestyle which is commonly found to be linked

with further delinquency and victimization as runaways often have to resort to criminalized behaviours in order to survive on the streets.

Chesney-Lind (1997) found that laws that were originally put in place to “protect” young people have, in the case of some girls, criminalized their survival strategies. She notes how a large number of young women are on the run from sexual abuse and parental neglect and are forced to evade law enforcement avoid being returned to their destructive homes. As such, they are unable to enrol in school or take a job to support themselves because they fear detection and instead are forced to survive on the streets. Here, they often have to engage in panhandling, petty theft, and occasional prostitution in order to survive (Chesney-Lind, 1997). Thus, a feminist analysis would also examine the juvenile justice system’s role in the criminalization of girls’ survival strategies (Chesney-Lind, 1989; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Holsinger, 2000).

Moreover, Chesney-Lind (1989) argues that feminist analyses of delinquency should examine how the official actions of the youth justice system are major forces in young women’s oppression as they have historically served to reinforce the obedience of all young women to demands of patriarchy (Chesney-Lind, 1989). She argues that agencies of social control, such as the police, courts, and prisons, act in ways to reinforce young women’s place in a male dominated society. As such, Chesney-Lind and Shelden (2004) suggests that feminist analyses examine the juvenile justice system’s role in the sexualization of female delinquency.

Furthermore, while boys and girls are frequently the recipients of violence and sexual abuse, Chesney-Lind (1997) argues that young women’s victimization and their response to that victimization is specifically shaped by their status as young women. She suggests that perhaps because of the gender and sexual scripts found in patriarchal families, girls are much

more likely than boys to be the victim of family-related abuse. She also notes that because young girls are defined as sexually desirable, their lives on the streets (and their survival strategies) are also shaped by patriarchal values.

Intersecting Oppressions

Feminist perspectives also examine other structural factors impacting young women's lives, such as poverty and racism. Chesney-Lind (2006) notes how patriarchal interests often overlap with other systems that also reinforce class and race privilege. She proposes that feminist criminology must examine how patriarchal control mechanisms are maintained through criminal justice practices by focusing analyses on the race/gender/punishment nexus. Holsinger (2000) finds the limited amount of research about how race and social class interact with gender, particularly regarding girls' pathways to offending is due, at least in part, to racism and the low priority typically given to research on females in general, and particularly girls from marginalized groups. Thus, a feminist theory of delinquency would include situating female youths' behaviour within its patriarchal context by examining how young women's experiences are shaped by their status in a gendered, racialized, and classed society (Chesney-Lind, 1989). Thus, researchers must engage in the exploration of the interface between systems of oppression based on gender, race, and class (Chesney-Lind, 2006).

Limitations

Like all theories of crime, feminist perspectives of female delinquency and crime are not without their share of criticisms. The above feminist theorists argue that traditional theories of delinquency are inadequate for explaining girls' crime because they were

developed mainly by male theorists and researchers to explain men's criminality. However, Steffensmeier and Allan (1996) maintain that traditional theories of delinquency are still valid and useful in explaining overall patterns of women's and men's offending, especially when examining why girls do not commit as much crime as boys. Similarly, Giordano, Deines, and Cernkovich (2006) suggest that traditional delinquency theories are still relevant in explaining young women's crimes. In their life course study, they interviewed young women involved in serious levels of delinquency and then did follow-up interviews with these participants when they were adults. Akin to the early theories, Giordano and her colleagues found that the young women in their study tended to experience themes such as economic marginality, disadvantaged neighbourhoods and delinquent peer associations. However, these themes were often intertwined with experiences of sexual abuse and a reoccurring pattern of negative male influence. As such, they argue that a comprehensive explanation of women's pathways and desistance out of crime requires combining traditional theories with the contemporary feminist perspectives rather than adopting an either/or theoretical stance.

Feminist perspectives of female delinquency are criticized for their extensive focus on the victimization of female youths. Goodkind (2005) suggests the emphasis on victimization denies girls a sense of agency. Similarly, Daly and Maher (1998) find that the emphasis on the "blurred boundaries between victimization and criminalization" (p. 8) may ignore crucial questions of agency and responsibility with regards to women's involvement in criminal behaviours. Undisputedly, feminist frameworks of female delinquency often draw attention to young women's victimization and make the argument that this experience is often a precursor to them becoming involved in criminalized activities. Belknap and Holsinger (1998) acknowledge that not all young women that come into conflict with the

law are abused and not all young women who have experienced various types of abuse end up engaging in criminal behaviours. However, they find that such victimization is a significant risk factor for young women and young men. Moreover, Chesney-Lind (1997) maintains that focusing on the lives of young women and particularly the data on the extent of their victimization is not to deny their agency by viewing them solely as “victims”, but rather it is to fully illuminate the context within which young women make “choices” and the degree to which their choices are confined by structural barriers.

Furthermore, while there has been a growth in the feminist literature addressing the negative impact of broader structural factors such as sexism, racism, and classism on young women, its ability to translate into practice is less visible. As discussed in Chapter 1, feminist research has led to the development of gender-specific programming that attempts to better reflect the lived realities of at-risk and criminalized young women than the traditional gender-neutral programming. However, programming efforts for young women continue to be focused on the individual rather than addressing the broader factors that impact young women’s lives (Goodkind, 2005).

Implications

Feminism has greatly influenced how young women are theorized and studied in criminology. Moreover, feminist works have shifted the focus of the problem and solutions away from the individual, and towards structures; thus, “[f]eminism begins to transgress criminology” (Cain, 1989, p. 3) which has had, and continues to have, various implications for research, policy, and programming. There has been a growth in the amount of research on young women and crime, which has shed light on the girls’ lived realities, with particular

attention paid to understanding how girls' increased risk of abuse and trauma is necessary to be more effective in responding to both their victimization and their criminalized behaviours. Subsequently, there is a push for gender-specific programming.

Holsinger (2000) emphasizes that building a positive gender identity for young women seems to be an important aspect of gender-specific programming. Part of building a positive gender identity would include culturally sensitive programming that acknowledges the impact of race in the lives of girls. Ultimately, researchers advocate for programming that reflects girls' unique experiences (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Chesney-Lind, 1997). Thus, Chesney-Lind (2006) notes that for feminist criminology to remain true to its progressive origins, researchers and scholars must seek ways to blend activism with scholarship.

Despite its limitations, the feminist perspectives of female delinquency as proposed by Chesney-Lind, Belknap, and Holsinger offer promising insights into understanding and explaining the realities of "at-risk" and criminalized young women as agents of their own lives, as well as "women of discourse" by drawing upon empirical studies to show how they have been represented in various policy, practice and criminological discourses. Belknap and Holsinger's "pathways" framework provides an understanding of a common sequence of events that many young women who come into conflict with the law experience. Whereas Chesney-Lind's feminist model of delinquency emphasizes how young women's experiences are often shaped by the intersections of gender, race and class. Moreover, Chesney-Lind emphasizes the need to examine how the official actions of the youth justice system maintain the oppression of young women.

Since the objectives of this study are to examine youth service providers' perceptions of "at-risk" or criminalized young women, as well as to explore how services available for

young women reflect their experiences, the concepts and issues identified by these feminist theorists will assist in the development of my thesis and the analysis of my interviews with these participants.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the research methodology and methods utilized in the collection and analysis of data for this study. This information will be presented chronologically providing the reader a clear description of the research process and the procedures implemented throughout the study. This chapter commences by explaining the decision to use a qualitative approach, followed by an examination of the research process; this includes a detailed account of the construction of the interview guide, addressing ethical concerns, and the recruitment of participants. The next section describes the instruments and procedures used in the collection of data, followed by a discussion on how the data was analyzed. Lastly, the limitations of this study will be discussed.

Research Approach: Qualitative Research

When choosing how to conduct this study, I decided upon qualitative research methods instead of pursuing a quantitative approach. As described in the introduction, the goal of this study was to understand and explore how community-based youth service providers perceived the issues and needs of “at-risk” and criminalized young women, and how they endeavoured to address these concerns. A qualitative research approach was ideal in that its main purposes are to “understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, [and] to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu...” (Glesne, 2006, p. 4). I was interested in exploring a variety of community-based youth service providers’ perspectives to get a deeper understanding of the issues faced by “at-risk” young women and the context of programming for this group of individuals. As such, I adopted qualitative research methods to explore the subjective experience of these

youth service providers. In contrast, quantitative research methods that focus on collecting numerical data for the purposes of, for example, establishing causes and effects did not seem particularly well suited for the goal of this study: that of understanding complex social processes such as that of a practitioner's working relationship with youths.

Data Collection: Semi-structured Interviews

Within qualitative research, semi-structured interviewing is a common method used in the collection of data because it yields a great deal of information quickly and allows for immediate follow-up and clarification (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As such, this type of interviewing was ideal for collecting information on participants' first-hand knowledge of "at-risk" young women's experiences, as well as the social dynamics within the youth service community. These research methods are compatible with the feminist perspectives that guide this study, which allowed for greater equality within the researcher-participant relationship. Semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity for participants to express their opinions in their own words; therefore, I was able to access these participants' ideas while also providing them participants with greater control in the research process (Reinharz, 1992). Semi-structured interviews provided the opportunity for me to explore the issue of programming for "at-risk" and criminalized young women more openly than had I conducted structured interviews or survey research; because, it allowed space for the participants and me to freely interact. This interview structure also allowed me to explore the major concepts identified in the literature on "at-risk" and criminalized young women to ensure that I collected the participants' perspectives on those issues.

The Research Process and Procedures

In order to get more familiar with the types of services and programs available at community-based agencies within the Ottawa region that are offered to “at-risk” and criminalized young women, I examined the *Community Information Centre of Ottawa’s* website which features the *e-Blue Book* an online directory of all of the community resources available in the city. Specifically, I examined the mission statements, philosophies, programs, and services as indicated on the official internet websites of the various community-based, youth serving agencies that addressed the risk factors or concepts generated through the literature on female delinquency. This information is important for understanding the context of the youth servicing community as it provided an overview of the general themes or patterns apparent in programming and services for youths. I particularly wanted to examine how gender-specific programs and services available for young women reflected their experiences.

In addition, this background information of the community-based agencies and the services and programs they provide, along with the concepts identified through the literature review on “at-risk” female youths, helped to inform the development of the interview guide. This interview guide helped to systematize the questioning of the participants I would later interview. I noted the following key themes or concepts that seemed to be relevant in the lives of these young women: violence, family issues, school problems, and drug use. In developing the interview guide, I kept many of the questions open-ended, allowing room for the participants to discuss the things that they found important (See Appendix A).

The topics that I wanted to explore with each participant were:

- What are the experiences of “at-risk” young women?
- What are the mandates, missions and principles of that youth serving agency and how does that guide their understandings of young women?
- What services are offered and how are they delivered to the young women?
- How do these services address issues of diversity and culture?
- What do they view as being barriers to service delivery, and what are their recommendations regarding how to better serve “at-risk” youth populations?

Following the creation of this guide, I submitted an application to the University of Ottawa’s Research Ethics Board (REB).

Ethical Considerations

Since this study would involve human participants, I sought approval from the University of Ottawa’s Research Ethics Board (REB) prior to the commencement of recruiting participants. Approval for this study was delayed due to some conditions that required further elaboration. These conditions were addressed and approval was granted in August 2008.

All of the following ethical safeguards were taken before starting the interviews. First, in order to achieve informed consent, honest and complete information regarding what the youth service providers’ participation involved was explained verbally to each participant. It was also provided in a written consent form that explained the purpose of this study, discussed issues of confidentiality and anonymity in detail, outlined the costs of their participation, explained the possible benefits of their participation, made known what risks might be involved, and lastly informed them that they were free to withdraw their consent and discontinue their participation at any point (See Appendix B). Also, I provided my thesis supervisor’s contact information as well as my own.

Second, anonymity and confidentiality were assured for those who participated in this study. Since these informants often work with quite marginalized and vulnerable young women, the interests and anonymity of not only the participants but also their service users were of the utmost importance to protect in this study. Therefore, while the interviews were digitally tape recorded, the participants' names were never recorded and respondents are only referred to by a pseudonym. Similarly, all personally identifying information was removed so that the contents of the quotations will not reveal participant identities.

Lastly, the risks versus the potential benefits of the study were brought to the participants' attention. Following each interview, time was set aside for an off-the-record debriefing session to discuss any concerns the participants may have had. Furthermore, the participants were all provided a copy of their interview transcripts so that they would have the opportunity to clarify the responses they provided in the interviews.

The Recruitment Process

The participants were recruited through "snowball sampling" which began by locating individuals that worked at community-based agencies and provided services for "at-risk" youths. Through my fourth year undergraduate field placement at Ottawa's Youth Probation Service and my own volunteer work in the community, I had become aware of an individual who worked with "at-risk" young women. I approached this individual, explained the purpose of this study, and inquired whether she would be interested in participating in it. She had agreed and an interview was scheduled within a week. Following this initial interview, further recruitment efforts were done through "snowball sampling" strategies where participants were asked the names of other individuals who possess similar attributes

(Berg, 2006); specifically, they also work for community-based agencies that provide services for “at-risk” young women.

Within a week after the completion of an interview, I contacted the individual(s) that the participant had referred me to, briefly explained the purpose of my study, and what their participation would entail. All the referrals that I was able to reach agreed to participate in the study. However, there were some individuals that were referred that did not return my call or email. At one point, all my leads had ended. I then resorted back to the *e-Blue Book* and contacted agencies with individuals matching the characteristics necessary for this study.

In addition, since each participant represented an organization, their agency’s executive director was contacted and provided an Agency Permission Form which outlined the purpose of this study, issues of confidentiality, as well as anonymity (See Appendix C). Once approval was given by the executive directors to gain entry into their organizations, interviews were then scheduled with the individual participants. Prior to the commencement of each interview, the participants were given the informed consent form.

The Participants

In total, I conducted seven semi-structured interviews with various individuals employed at youth serving community-based agencies in an effort to gain insight about their lived reality in this line of work and their reflections on their experiences. I recruited five of the participants through referrals and two were individually identified and contacted. The research activities took place over five month period; the first interview took place in September 2008 and the last in January 2009. Five of the participants are female, and the other two are male. All participants had worked with youths for at least one year. While I

had initially sought to interview primarily front-line youth workers, some of the referrals I received from participants led me to interview individuals that worked more indirectly with the youths, meaning these individuals did not provide frontline services to youth, but rather worked at a managerial level overseeing the agency's programs and services. Each participant was sent a copy of the interview guide prior to their interviews so that they would have an idea of the main issues I wanted to examine. I had sent the questions to the participants because the University of Ottawa's REB had suggested that this may facilitate the interview process. The extent to which this facilitated the process is questionable because most of the participants could not recall the questions I had prepared. In addition, I explained that it was just a guide, and that they were free to discuss any other issues that they felt were relevant.

In the end, four participants worked directly with youth as frontline service providers, the other three participants had more administrative functions. I conducted five of the interviews at their place of employment; I conducted the other two participants' interviews over the telephone. Interview times ranged from one hour to one hour and twenty minutes in length. All interviews were digitally recorded. I was able to record the two telephone interviews by placing it on the "speaker" function so that I could record both sides of the conversation. In the following section, I will provide a brief description of each participant, the agency in which they are employed, and details regarding the interview itself.

Participant 1: "Ally"

"Ally" is a woman in her late thirties and currently works for a feminist organization that supports women that have experienced sexual violence. She has been employed at this agency for over twelve years. Noticing the prevalence of sexual abuse in the lives of

criminalized and marginalized young women, she created a program that specifically addresses the issues commonly experienced by this population and has been the coordinator of it for the last eleven years. Ally primarily runs this program; however, over the last year, she has contracted another woman to assist her with this program. This agency serves women only, has six full-time and two part-time staff, and relies heavily on its volunteer members. I conducted this interview with “Ally” at her agency on the morning of Wednesday September 10, 2008. The interview lasted 1 hour and 19 minutes and resulted in thirty-five pages of transcript. The interview was quite relaxed. Ally offered a great deal of information and was very candid in providing a critical analysis of the current issues within the field of youth services. At the end of the interview, she referred me to “Elaine”.

Participant 2: “Elaine”

My interview with “Elaine” took place on Tuesday September 30, 2008, at her office. “Elaine” is in her early forties and has worked for the same non-profit organization for over 10 years. Her agency provides services specifically for women that have been in conflict with the law. She is currently a youth counsellor and works with “at-risk” and criminalized young women that have been referred or mandated to see her. She helped create the two programs for young women at this agency; she presently still coordinates both programs. She provides mainly on-site individual and group counselling, while one other female staff member provides off-site services to young women that are incarcerated. Her agency currently employs 18 staff members. The interview with “Elaine” lasted approximately one hour and fifteen minutes. This interview produced nineteen pages of transcript that was the least amount compared with all of the other participants’ transcripts. She provided two names of relevant youth service providers for me to contact.

Participant 3: “Bill”

“Elaine” recommended this participant. While he was eager to participate in this study, he was unable to meet with me in person due to his busy schedule. Instead, my interview with “Bill” took place over the telephone. The interview with “Bill” occurred on Wednesday October 15, 2008. Bill is in his late forties and is the Co-ordinator of his program, which is a branch of a larger youth organization. His work is administrative in nature, consisting of managing his staff and maintaining and developing networks with other youth serving agencies. “Bill’s” agency works with both male and female youths, and its mandate is to divert youth out of the court process. His agency’s role is solely to assess youths using the Youth Level of Service/ Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) and then refer them to an agency, or agencies, which address their identified “needs”. “Bill” offered a wealth of information and was very open to discussing problematic issues within the youth serving community. This interview lasted one hour and three minutes and resulted in twenty-nine pages of transcript. He provided the names of two additional youth service providers.

Participant 4: “Renee”

“Renee” was also referred to me by “Elaine”. I conducted my interview with “Renee” on Friday October 10, 2008 at her office. “Renee” is the Program Coordinator of her agency’s young women’s housing program, which is an extension of a larger youth organization. She is in her late forties, has worked for this organization for over twenty years, and was integral in the creation of this specific young women’s facility and its programming. Her specific agency is based on feminist principles and employs over thirty

women staff, eight of whom are full-time, the remaining are part-time and casual. Her initial work with this agency had been front-line in nature; however, her current work as the Program Coordinator has meant that she currently works at an a managerial level. This interview lasted approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes and resulted in twenty-six pages of transcript. This interview was very relaxed, and the participant was open when discussing her work. Following the interview, Renee gave me a quick tour of the facility. The woman that she referred me to did not result in an interview because all attempts to contact her did not elicit a response.

Participant 5: “Lucy”

Unlike the previous 4 youth service providers, I was not referred to this participant. Rather, she was one of the two individuals I had sought out based on the *e-Blue Book* and who responded back to my requests. “Lucy” is the youngest of the participants and is in her early twenties. She is currently a Youth Worker at an Aboriginal women’s centre. While she has only been employed with this agency for one year, she has been involved with this agency’s youth programming for many years as she was once one of its youth participants. Thus, this offers an important dynamic to Lucy’s narrative in that she has insights from both a service user and a service providers’ point of view. This centre offers Aboriginal and First Nations’ women support, resources, and activities. In addition, the youth program “Lucy” coordinates offers educational and recreational activities, many of which are culturally specific, for youths. While the agency that “Lucy” works for provides gender-specific programs for adult women, its youth programs are open to both males and females. In addition, the youth program also has a diversion component for those youths that are referred and mandated.

The interview with “Lucy” took place on Friday December 6, 2008. This interview was very relaxed as illustrated by the participant feeling comfortable enough to disclose anecdotes that are more personal. This interview lasted one hour and eleven minutes and generated twenty-five pages of transcript.

Participant 6: “Georgia”

Similar to “Lucy”, I contacted this participant through a cold call to the agency. A person from this agency identified “Georgia” as the person to speak with and passed on my request to interview her. “Georgia” later contacted me and agreed to participate in this research study. “Georgia” is in her early thirties and is currently the Program Coordinator of a national youth mentoring agency. While she initially worked for this agency as a frontline youth service provider, for the last few years she has worked at an administration level, coordinating all of the regional programs. She stated that her direct contact with youth is often limited to public events. Her program provides youths and children with mentors of the same sex. In addition, one of the programs offered through this agency is specifically for young women. It features two female adult mentors co-facilitating activities and discussions with a group of approximately eight young women. This program for young women often takes place within various schools. I interviewed “Georgia” on Friday December 12, 2008 at her office and the interview lasted one hour and four minutes. This interview resulted in twenty-eight pages of transcript.

Participant 7: “Richard”

“Bill” had referred me to “Richard”. Due to his hectic schedule and my own transportation issues, I conducted this interview over the phone. “Richard” is in his mid-

thirties and is a Youth Counsellor with one of Ottawa's community health centres. He has been employed with this agency for the last three years, but has worked with youths for over ten years. He provides counselling services for youths, most of whom are referred or mandated to seek counselling from him. He provides most of his counselling services at the community health centre; however, he also provides off-site counselling services at two Ottawa high schools. He works with both young men and women, though he noted that most of the youths that are mandated to see him are male. The interview with "Richard" took place on Thursday January 22, 2009 and lasted one hour and resulted in twenty pages of transcript. He was very candid and offered a wealth of information regarding his work with youths.

Data Analysis

Each interview yielded large amounts of information. In order to make the data gathered more manageable, I transcribed each interview verbatim into written text. I then performed a thematic analysis of each interview transcript, which involved coding and then grouping the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description (Glesne, 2006). First, I performed a thorough reading on each transcript to tentatively identify the major themes that were present within that interview. Following which, I reread all transcripts with the responses coded according to the final categories that were developed. For instance, I first created a "Major Code" or topic such as "The experiences of "at-risk" and criminalized young women" and then I identified the "subcodes" or major themes that were apparent when the participants discussed this topic. Within the first major code, the participants identified various issues, which were "clumped" into the following subcodes: violence, family conflict, residential instability, institutionalization, health problems, drug

use issues, and academic failure. I created two further major codes/topics, which were “the types of services offered to young women” and “barriers to service delivery and recommendations for improving services”. Within each of these two major codes, I sorted out pieces of the transcripts to create subcodes/ themes. I then analyzed each of the participants’ responses against the general themes identified in the literature review and the preliminary research questions.

Feminist perspectives informed the analysis of this data by contextualizing young women’s experiences within the broader socio-political context. Feminist scholars’ research on young women’s crime notes the presence of many of these issues. As such, I drew upon these elements in order to demonstrate that the problems that individual young women experience should be examined within the cultural context that in occurs. Thus, I present the data according the patterns that arise and how such elements often interconnect with other aspects of young women’s lives. Therefore, a feminist lens locates the problems, and the solutions, as stemming from the structural barriers in society, rather than locating it primarily in the individual.

Limitations of the Study

Various issues posed limitations for this study. First, the recruitment of participants initially began with “snowball sampling” as I was an acquaintance of the initial participant and aware of her program and work with “at-risk” young women. Through this participant and all subsequent ones, I was linked to others who work in this same field. This technique allowed me to develop connections and generate a larger sample of participants with certain attributes (i.e. community-based youth service providers). However, one major issue with

this sampling technique is that these youth service providers were likely to refer other individuals who have similarities with them, such as they adopt similar viewpoints and approaches in their work with youths. Therefore, while this social dynamic perhaps may have facilitated in acquiring potential participants, it may have also limited the range of perspectives on the issues I was examining.

Second, in order to get multiple perspectives on this issue of programming for young women, I interviewed seven service providers. Unfortunately, the participants' time constraints did not permit the opportunity to interview them on multiple occasions. Multiple interviews with the participants would have allowed the chance to follow up on probes that I may have missed during the initial interview and provided opportunities for participants to elaborate on their ideas. Interviewing each participant multiple times may have provided a more in-depth understanding on their perspectives and the issues that arise in their work with young women or youths.

Third, supplementing the interviews with other forms of qualitative data collection methods such as participant observation, or open-ended surveys, was not feasible because the former would compromise the confidentiality of their service users, while the latter would not likely produce additional information since the interviews were designed to be open-ended. In addition, financial and time constraints did not allow for the creation and distribution of an open-ended survey to be delivered to all of the community-based youth service providers within the city of Ottawa.

Fourth, due to two of the participants' schedules, I conducted their interviews over the telephone. This may have resulted in the decreased quality of the interviews because of the loss of face-to-face nonverbal cues, which are important for guiding the pace of the interview (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). However, since I was conducting semi-structured

interviews, the direction was not hindered by these circumstances. Also, I was still able to develop a rapport with these two participants which was apparent by the way they discussed their experiences with such candour.

Lastly, I had an eight interview scheduled, but his agency's Executive Director failed to submit a signed permission form. This resulted in the loss of an important perspective as that youth service provider worked for at a prominent diversion program specifically targeting Aboriginal and First Nations' youths. This interview would have provided valuable insight on culturally-responsive programming for "at-risk" youths.

This chapter provided a detailed explanation of the research process and procedures in which I engaged. The next chapter presents the major results obtained by these methods, as well as an analysis of these findings.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

In order to address the issue of how community-based services and programs reflect the realities of “at-risk” young women, I organized the data into two chapters.

This chapter examines what these youth service providers perceived as the major issues young women experience. The next chapter explores how participants view young women’s needs. Lastly, this section examines the frameworks that these practitioners adhered to, how they approached their work with youth, and the subsequent services they provide to them.

The Experiences of “At-Risk” Young Women

A thorough examination and comparison of the interviews revealed that there were several common themes present in the lives of these young women. These include experiences of violence, family conflict, housing instability/homelessness, drug and alcohol use issues, institutionalization, academic disruption, and physical and mental health issues all of which are consistent with recent research on the gender differences in delinquency and the recognition of girls’ and women’s “pathways to offending” (Belknap & Holsinger, 2008).

Violence & Abuse

The majority of young women that participants work with have experienced some form of violence and abuse. Five of the seven participants explicitly identified that young women had disclosed that they were subjected to violence and abuse at some point in their lives. Invariably, most of the young women had experienced some form of the following types of violence: childhood sexual abuse, adult sexual assault, sexual exploitation, physical

violence, partner violence, and family violence. It was evident throughout the interviews that the extent of violence and abuse was widespread; as illustrated by comments such as: “A lot of young women may have had a history of violence or sexual abuse”, and “There's obviously very often physical violence” where it was estimated that approximately “ninety percent of our women” have experienced violence in their lives.

In addition, four of the participants specifically identified young women's experiences of sexual violence noting “there's a whole range of types of sexual violence women are experiencing”. One participant noted the common pattern of how young women disclose these issues to service providers: in an incarceration environment, the young woman may disclose a great deal of information during those initial meetings and then not talk about it again for years, or if the woman is in a period of crisis and instability, she won't talk about past sexual violence issues until her life has balanced out and she has acquired some stability. As such, two participants argued that “traditional counselling”, which often expects young women to talk about certain issues, such as sexual violence, does not work with this population because the trust between the support worker and the young women may not be established to the point where she feels she can discuss such matters.

In cases where the service provider is a man, the working relationship with young women that have experienced sexual violence is more complicated because their abusers were often men. Based on his past work experience providing outreach to street-involved youths, one participant noted, “I'm a guy, talking to mostly women who have been abused horribly and continue to be by being a sex trade worker for so long”. As such, young women that have experienced violence at the hands of a man may find it even more difficult to establish trust with men practitioners compared to women practitioners (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004).

The participants found that such experiences of violence often had grave and ongoing impacts on the lives of young women. They noted that young women would often times “internalize their feelings” where they would direct their frustration against themselves, for example, through self-harming behaviours such as drug use or self-cutting. Many of the participants noted that such abuse often had negative effects on their “anxiety levels, their stress levels, their feelings of safety, trust”. Understandably, young women’s feelings of safety and trust would be impacted greatly since much of these earlier experiences of abuse were often perpetrated by supposedly ‘trusted’ adults whether it was parents, family members, family friends, legal guardians, and foster parents (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004).

The reoccurring themes of women having histories of violence and abuse were evident throughout the interviews, which reflects the growing body of research documenting “at-risk” and criminalized young women’s histories of victimization. For example, in the National Council on Crime and Delinquency’s (NCCD) study of girls within California’s juvenile justice system, it was found that ninety-two percent of the girls experienced some form of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse (Acoca & Dedel, 1998). Researchers argue that victimization often represents the first step along females’ “pathways” to coming into conflict with the law (Acoca & Dedel, 1998; Belknap & Holsinger, 1998).

Family Conflict and Fragmentation

The second major theme was the issue of family conflict and fragmentation. While young women were often referred and mandated to the participants’ services and/or programs to specifically deal with issues such as theft or aggression, one participant found that “once you kind of peel back the first few layers, then you see that the issues are about

family...” Issues such as family conflict were often inextricably intertwined with young women’s experiences of violence as it frequently occurred within the context of the family. Four participants all noted the involvement of The Children’s Aid Society (CAS) in many of the young women’s lives, where CAS was notified of suspected or confirmed incidences of violence and abuse within the family. These young women were subsequently removed from their families and placed them into “protective” care.

Removal, however, even if it was from an undesirable and chaotic situation, was often very distressing for young women. Similar to the fact that the young women had little control over their disruptive and often dysfunctional family situations, one participant perceived they felt “powerless to control their lives... where they've been taken from their families and put into CAS”. This lack of agency over their own lives has meant that some young women have to find ways to cope with difficult and sometimes very abusive situations. For example, one participant described one young woman’s struggle between staying in an abusive family or being put in the child welfare system:

When she's going back on the home visit, she's getting the crap kicked out of her every single week. But she has younger siblings that are in the home, and she's going back there in order to take the violence for the younger siblings. She will not tell anybody that this is what's happening... Because she knows, if she tells anybody this is what's happening, her younger siblings are going to go into CAS care and go to a group home.

This example illustrates the powerlessness many young women feel in that they are often denied the opportunity to discuss the problems that they are experiencing with their families and to examine the options that are available. As such, youth are often denied the space to even discuss the issues of violence they may be experiencing with their families because they realise that by doing so, they will be abruptly removed and put into CAS care. This

example illustrated how the inability for a young women to control her information can resort in one continuing to experience her abuse in silence.

Often the violence occurring within the family has ripple effects on the lives of these young women. Years and years of family conflict, where they are subjected to various forms of abuse, has huge impacts on how young women feel and think. As one participant noted “when you’re told you’re a piece a shit most your life, what are you going to think? What are you going to think love is? What are you going to think family is?” Participants noted that the young women often found various ways of coping with these difficult situations, and as one participant noted it often consisted of “running away, curfew issues, and skipping school” (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Goodkind, Ng, & Sarri, 2006).

While three of the participants work exclusively with young women, one participant, who works with boys and girls diverted from the youth court, provided insight on the gender differences with regard to family conflicts. Based on the Youth Level of Service /Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) assessments he has conducted, this participant finds young women tend to score higher in their risk levels in the Family Circumstances or Parenting portion of the assessment tool, which suggests girls have greater conflict with their parents than boys. In one study, family conflict was strongest “risk” factor contributing to delinquency whereas positive family interaction the most important “protective” factor (Bloom, Owen, Piper Deschenes, & Rosenbaum, 2002).

In addition to the violence and conflict that many young women experience in their families, they often experience issues of family fragmentation as well. A prime example of fragmentation occurred as a result of the residential school system. One participant, who works primarily with Aboriginal youths, found that for many of the youths in her program the intergenerational impacts of residential schools greatly disrupts their families and

relationships resulting in a loss of family teachings, family support, and inevitably the loss of many youths' self-esteem, self-knowledge, traditional knowledge and essentially "a lot of not knowing who you are". The overall history of how Aboriginal and First Nations' Peoples were treated resulted in the fragmentation of many youths' relationships with their families causing a great deal of hurt which this participant suggests puts the majority of youths she works with "at-risk".

Residential Instability and Homelessness

The third major and pressing issue that participants identified was the issue of homelessness that many of the young women experienced as illustrated by one participant's comment that: "Many of the young women that I work with have never had a home". Instead, their lives are often characterized by their transient nature in which they have had multiple residences beginning with the home that they shared with their families of origin. These were often riddled with conflict resulting in them having to, usually reluctantly, reside in group homes, foster homes or other residential facilities. For many of these young women, their housing options are limited. One participant found it extremely problematic that: "There's a gap of housing for young women who don't want to be in CAS. They want to be independent, but they need some support. There just isn't enough housing, affordable housing". So for young women who cannot live safely with their families and who do not want to be under the care of CAS, there are few alternatives.

Participants noted a series of issues that constrain young women's housing options. One participant commented on how young women trying to live independently faced many difficulties such that "Trying to rent an apartment at sixteen by yourself, on Ontario Works, that's a triple whammy: you're a woman, you're on social assistance, and you're sixteen".

In addition, she found that sexual orientation and gender identity also play a big part of homeless youths' lives stating that "the stat is anywhere from twenty to forty percent, of youth that are on the street identify as lesbian/bisexual/gay/transgender". Moreover, young women who have issues around addictions further complicate their ability to find stable, safe, and affordable housing because, as another participant found, these are:

... lifestyles that the average landlord wouldn't approve of, or a facility like a residence won't/can't accommodate. There's just no place, you know, except for maybe run down boarding houses or something where there is very little safety and there's no support.

Furthermore, the implications resulting from not having stable housing are vast and compound the issues faced by many of these young women. In the past, under the Young Offender's Act (YOA, 1984), which has since been replaced by the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA, 2002), not having a stable home often resulted in young women spending periods of time in "training schools" such as jails. One participant found that "Young women were incarcerated for months at a time because of breaches, you know, or housing related issues. There was nowhere to release them, so they kept them in jail". The new YCJA sets out more concrete guidelines as to reasons a youth can be kept in custody; however, inadvertently youths can still be kept in secure custody for housing related issues, such as not having a stable residence the court can release them to, because the types of housing designed specifically for youths are often problematic. For example, one participant commented that:

What people attempt to do for youth to provide housing, like putting them into group homes, the population that I work with, that's never going to happen. They're going to run away from that group home, and the minute that they do they're going to get charged and they're going to have them in jails. It's just a total obvious thing.

Housing designed for youth often fails to take in account what three of the participants identified as common, namely running away, something that has helped them survive in the past the pattern for which cannot be broken in a short period of time.

In the past, behaviours such as running away or perceived “incorrigibility” were considered status offences; young women were charged with said offences more frequently than their male counterparts (Geller, 1987). While status offences have long been decriminalized, Reitsma-Street (1999) argues that the old status offences were replaced with the new “status-like” failure to comply offences and administrative offences. Thirty percent of female youths convicted of crimes against the administration of justice, which include offences categorized as “Unlawfully at large”, “Fail to comply with order” and “Breach of probation”, are sentenced to custody (Kong & AuCoin, 2008). Thus, Reitsma-Street’s argument is still relevant under the current YCJA (2002) as these “status-like” administrative offences continue to play a major role in young women’s criminalization. By ignoring many young women’s common pattern of running away and designing housing that does not reflect this population’s experiences, not only will they continuously be caught in what one participant described as an “unending cycle of rebuilding, re-getting, losing, getting again,” but their patterns also make them more vulnerable to being be criminalized for administrative offences. This pattern results in what Chesney-Lind (1997) argues is the youth justice system’s role in the criminalization of young women’s survival strategies.

One participant drew attention to how the lack of stable housing also results in youth being denied access to various social services that are supposed to be available to everyone; without a stable place to call home, it is incredibly difficult for young women to hold onto their important documents and pieces of identification. Without such identification, these

young women are unable to access many of the social services they require, such as health care and social assistance.

Institutionalization

As touched on briefly already, many of the young women that the participants worked with are involved with various institutional systems, such as the child welfare and the youth justice system, which as one participant stated brings with it “all of the different things that happen to youth who are cogs or in that system at that point”. Often youths’ experiences within these systems are very negative, as one participant described: “they’ve had some really shitty experiences”. The participants acknowledged that youths’ negative experiences, whether it is from child welfare or some other system, were often due to the fact that their needs were not met. Repeated experiences of various systems failing them have led many youths to distrust youth service providers, and for some it takes years before they develop a trusting relationship with the service provider.

In addition to the mistrust that developed from not having their needs met, youths could have also learned this through their experiences with youth workers who had misused or abused their power. One participant observed that:

One of the biggest things in seeing kids and hearing from kids that have been in the group homes, and I’ve seen it myself, [is that] abuse of power is quite rampant. It’s out of staff’s at times laziness, out of inexperienced staff that are getting paid ten bucks an hour to work with the most vulnerable kids which is really scary.

“Abuses of power” were identified as problematic within various youth service institutions, and include things such as workers joking around about unlocking doors for young women and the practice of using restraints on distressed youths. Both practices triggered fear for those who had experienced violence and abuse in their past. Thus, illustrating that in some

cases, youth service providers and some of the practices, which are condoned in specific youth serving agencies, can have a negative impact on youth, by engendering their distrust of other service providers.

It was apparent that many young women struggle with having to be in the child welfare system; aptly illustrated in one participant's recollections of one of her long time service users:

...and she was in CAS, and she was young maybe thirteen, and she had had a really disruptive family life. Didn't like group homes that she was in, and she'd been moved around five or six group homes. And she would run from the group homes and she would get breached. And so started ended up going to jail because she was being AWOL... All she wanted to do was just get out of CAS eventually which she did... But at the time she just felt so frustrated and powerless and wanted freedom so much and so tired being breached for running away all the time that was to her, her only option.

Similarly, Totten's (2000) study of incarcerated young women in Canada found that almost all of the participants voiced extremely negative experiences of both the child welfare system and the youth justice system. In that study, youths described feeling unheard, that "the system" did not understand why they were there and was not trying to help them.

Systemic Racial Discrimination

In addition, young women's experiences of such systems often differ greatly based on other factors, such as their race or culture. Two participants work with criminalized young women, and identified issues where young women's treatment within the youth justice system and their allied agencies differed based on race. One participant observed that "low intervention measures tend to, for whatever reason, have a higher percentage of white youths... Whereas, more secure measures, or more severe measures, I tend to see more women of colour streamed into those". Another participant's program is considered a "low

intervention measure” as it involves diversion away from the court system. Her comments on the general demographics of her service users reflected these racial differences:

It's more homogenous than probably...percentage wise, you know, about three percent of my clients would be Aboriginal. I see different people from different cultures in small percentages...I'd say that there's probably more Caucasian than any other cultural group.

Their observations illustrate how young women's experiences are shaped by their status in a gendered, racialized and classed society and how, for instance, criminal justice practices play a significant role in the oppression of young women of colour.

One participant specifically noted the Canadian government's historical treatment of the First Nations' People and the impacts this has on the youths she works with. This participant outlined how “the women here would have either attended or been intergenerationally impacted” by residential schools. She perceived that residential schools put many Aboriginal youths “at-risk” because it often resulted in a loss of traditional knowledge and ruptured family relationships, traditional hunting practices. The children who were placed in residential schools were often subjected to horrific levels of abuse. This participant stressed how all of these issues have negatively affected the self-esteem and self-knowledge of Aboriginal peoples.

While this participant noted the last residential school in Canada has been closed since the mid-1990s, the institutionalization of Aboriginal youths continues, albeit in a different form (namely, criminalization), and occurs at an alarming rate. According to a report by Statistics Canada, Aboriginal youths were highly represented within correctional services particularly Aboriginal female youths who in 2004/2005, represented 35% of all female youth admissions to secure custody and 29% of admissions to open custody; yet,

Aboriginal youths in general only accounted for approximately 5% of the total youth population (Calverley, 2007).

These findings stress the importance of an analysis which considers gender and its intersections with race when examining how the perceptions and practices of youth justice authorities and their allied agencies might be inadvertently and systemically more disadvantageous towards young women of colour.

Drug & Alcohol Issues

Another issue faced by the young women is substance use. Four of the seven youth service providers noted the existence of substance and drug use among the young women they work with. Some of the participants identified the way in which youths who used drugs and alcohol are perceived and treated within the youth serving community as being especially problematic.

The participants normalized a certain amount of drug and alcohol use amongst youth and as one participant explained: “Teenagers are experimental in terms of rule breaking... Many teenagers try some sort of substance in that period of time, not everyone, but certainly it's not abnormal behaviour and nor is it criminal behaviour I would say”. Similarly, another participant disagreed with one particular agency’s approach because they “tend to label these kids as addicts... They’re treated as that. They’re just having a tough time with it. They’re not addicts. They’re youth that do drugs”. So how drug and alcohol use by youths is perceived greatly affects the way in which services or programs are designed. The participants found that youths who use substances are often labelled as ‘addicts’ or ‘criminals’. This provides a very limited discursive framework that fails to take into account the broader social context of substance use.

Participants constructed drug and alcohol use among young women as normal and common response because that helped them cope with their dysfunctional and chaotic life circumstances. While one participant found that drug and alcohol use is an “unhealthy coping mechanism”, she recognized it is a learned behaviour. The coping is limited when it begins to take over their lives to the point where, as one participant noted, they were “ravaged by substance use everyday” often making it more difficult for them to finding stable housing and engage in “traditional counselling” work.

For many “at-risk” and criminalized young women, drug and alcohol use is a very common reality in their lives. In a Canadian study of incarcerated female young offenders, the levels of drug use were extremely high among this population, with 55% reporting crack use, 49% reporting heroin use, and 65.7% indicating cocaine use (Corrado, Odgers, & Cohen, 2000). The authors also explored the relationship between drug use and the type of re-offending and found that the frequency of crack use was an important factor in whether or not a female was subsequently charged with an administrative offence (Corrado, Odgers, & Cohen, 2000). Thus, excessive drug and alcohol use contributes to the marginalization of girls at risk.

Academic Disruption/Failure

Five of the seven youth service providers identified academic disruption as an issue experienced by young women. According to the YLS/CMI assessment that one participant conducts on all of the youths that go through his diversion program, he found that those who scored “moderately risky” on this assessment tool – which is a broad category encompassing youths who are perceived as “quite risky” to those that are close to “minimal risk” - scored low on the School and Education portion of the assessment. However, he found that the

young women tend to do better in School and Employment compared to their male counterparts.

Young women's formal education is often disrupted due to the instability they face in their lives often because the current mainstream school system is limited in its ability to accommodate their needs. As a result, one participant noted how:

So many young women I see around grade nine or ten disengage from the system because either the system can't deal with them, the structure isn't flexible enough, or the young women have such instability in their lives that they can't follow through on any degree of movement; because, they start a credit, lose a credit and they're in jail and out of jail.

In addition, the practices of various school administrators may contribute to youths' lack of success in school. The participants of this study often work with youths facing a great deal of difficulties including family violence, addictions, homelessness, criminalization, and poverty, which are quite often perceived in a very negative light. One participant noted how high schools are "not always welcoming to having a 'shelter kid' show up" which has a serious impact on young women on social assistance, as part of the Ontario Works' conditions they are expected to attend school. However, the lack of support from school administrators can create additional barriers for young women trying to fulfil this condition and obtain a high school education. One participant found that:

Once a kid is labelled, they're pretty much toast... So many youth give up and just, you know, never do well because either teachers or schools administration or their peers think that they are bad kids and treat them that way.

Thus, as a result of the instability faced by many of these young women, the negative labels applied to them, and the inflexibility of the school system, many face huge barriers in achieving academic success. Three participants noted the importance of the need for school administrators to be more supportive of these young women.

For many at-risk and criminalized young women, lack of academic achievement is an additional difficulty that they are experiencing. Acoca and Dedel (1998) found that an almost universal characteristic of the girls in the juvenile justice system in California was the history of school failure.

Physical & Mental Health Issues

Lastly, all of the participants noted the impacts such stressors (e.g. violence, poverty, homelessness etc.) had on young women's overall physical and mental health. For many of the young women, their transient and chaotic lifestyle prevents them from maintaining healthy habits because they rarely get the opportunities to eat and sleep regularly. Previously noted, many young women do not have access to regular health care, and with high rates of pregnancy as well as other health issues, access to a regular doctor is of the utmost importance for the maintenance of their health.

In addition, the stressors discussed in this section negatively affect young women's mental health. Five of the participants noted how young women internalize feelings regarding the stressors they experience, which causes depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and self-harming behaviours. One participant found that hospitals were constantly discharging young women who engage in self-harming behaviours, or those who have tried to commit suicide, to the shelter where she works since there was nowhere else for them to go. She recalled an incident where "a young woman a couple months ago took a razor and cut her arms, her legs and then wrapped herself in a sheet and was hiding from us. You know the pain that these young women are going through and how they've learned to cope is really tough".

Engaging in self-harming behaviour as coping strategies is not uncommon among at-risk young women (Kilty, 2006). In Belknap and Holsinger's (2006) study which sought to understand the risks associated with girls' and boys' delinquency, they found girls reported a significantly higher likelihood of mental health problems. Girls (54%) were more likely than boys (46%) to report purposefully hurting or harming themselves where girls (43%) were more than twice as likely as boys (19%) to indicate that they had cut or burned their bodies. Also, girls (52%) were more likely than boys (28.5%) to report thinking about committing suicide, and girls (46%) were more than twice as likely as boys (19%) to report that they had tried committing suicide.

This chapter outlined some of the issues that participants identified as affecting the young women they work with including: violence and abuse, family conflict/fragmentation, homelessness, substance and alcohol use issues, institutionalization, academic failure, and physical and mental health issues. These findings are consistent with existing feminist criminological literature and reflect the gendered differences in girls' "pathways" into delinquency (Acoca & Dedel, 1998; Belknap & Holsinger, 2008). While each issue was discussed separately, they intersect to create a more complex set of experiences faced criminalized and "at-risk" young women. The following chapter will examine the participants' working relationships with young women and the various challenges that each of the participants identified in their work within the youth service community.

Chapter 5: The Youth Service Providers' Perceptions of the Issues, Challenges, and Recommendations

This chapter examines the viewpoints participants adopted to guide how they perceived and addressed young women's needs, which subsequently influences the approaches they employ in their work. Thus, I examined each participant's opinion, or point of view, on the issues that increase young women's "risk" of coming into conflict with the law, and how the services they provided addressed those concerns. In order to meet the needs of young women involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the youth justice system, feminist criminological literature on female delinquency argues for the incorporation of gender-responsive programming, which entails: creating a safe environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of women's and girls' lives and is responsive to their needs and strengths (Bloom & Covington, 2001). The remainder of this chapter examines how the participants approach their work with young women, the various services they provide to them, and the extent to which these programs and services reflect a gender-specific approach to working with young women. Lastly, the barriers to service delivery and the recommendations advanced by the participants are presented.

The Importance of Relationships

Participants emphasized the importance of *relationships* in their understandings of the issues faced by young women. However, which issues the participants found are related often depends on the viewpoints they hold with regards to the issues that increase youths' risk of becoming involved in criminalized activities.

The Relationship Between Violence and Criminalization

One participant's program consists mainly of extremely marginalized and criminalized young women who have experienced sexual violence. The original and continued goal of her program, which is quite broad, is to find a way for those young women who have experienced violence, but who do not access support, to want to actually talk about their experiences. What guides her understanding of sexual violence is that:

All of these aspects of our lives can be linked back to our experiences of violence and abuse, and how we feel about them, and how well we feel we function within them can have links to that. So, there is no topic area that we don't consider related to what we are doing.

This broad understanding of sexual violence translates into an approach that encompasses a broad range of services, in which this participant offers generalized support around any issue that the woman names as being her need. Thus, young women are viewed as the experts of their own lives and are best able to identify *their* own needs. According to this participant, the needs young women identify as being most important and needing support around include advocacy, housing assistance, and court accompaniments. Advocacy services consisted of writing young women support letters, for example, to lawyers. This participant found that until a young woman's immediate crisis needs are satisfied and her life is stabilized, "traditional counselling" cannot occur. By providing generalized support, this participant works to build the foundation for trust to create a space where young women can feel safe to disclose and get support regarding their experiences of violence.

Similarly, another participant works specifically with young women who have already come into contact with the law. Many of the referrals she receives are either from lawyers or from a diversion program; however, while young women may be mandated to see her, she attempts to provide them with the space to identify their own needs and the best

ways to address them. While young women may be mandated to see her for counselling for issues stemming from incidents of theft or aggression, she found that there are important relationships between young women's current reasons for being sent to her for counselling and the "real underlying issues", such as a history of violence, which she argues consists of family and sexual violence. This participant claims that such "hurt" has secondary effects on young women, as it interferes with school and personal relationships. While this participant, like the preceding participant, links past abuse with young women's current situations, her approach differed slightly. She explained that:

We tend not to dwell a lot on the past. So, it's not like I sit and psychoanalyze about the past and your childhood. But we would kind of validate that the person you are today, is the person that developed because you were doing you're best to cope with life situations that you faced... And then validate that was a positive thing and not a negative thing but how we can change things, if you want to change things.

In her individual and group counselling sessions, she tries to develop self-acceptance, self-esteem, and assertiveness in young women by helping them with "strategies that people can employ on a daily basis that will just bring them more joy to their life, even when they're going through a lot of bad issues in life". This participant states that her approach to working with young women is "solution-focused" in that she presents young women with information and resources so they can develop healthier coping strategies.

Likewise, another participant noted the effects that family violence and other abuses have on young women and their methods of coping. The overall mission of this participant's program is to provide a place where young women can be physically and emotionally safe, where she can be without judgement, and in a women positive space. The guiding principles of her program stress respect for differences, choices, accountability, and "power with, rather than power over". Her program is based on an empowerment model which emphasizes that: "We're not here to tell them what to do. It's their journey. We believe that

power is knowledge and the more knowledge they have, the better informed”. This participant found that “All young women are trying to do is to meet their needs. And if we can understand what they need, then we can help support”. The approach this participant’s program takes emphasizes positive role modelling and providing healthier coping strategies while being the “burgeoning support” that many young women lack in their lives.

The Relationships Between Gender, Race, and Broader Culture

Similar to two other participants, this next participant provides front-line services within a counselling alliance. As a youth counsellor for one of the community health centres in Ottawa, his work is broadly guided by a holistic approach, which include: primary health care, housing support, employment assistance and so on. As such, this participant’s understandings of the issues youths experience emphasizes the importance of situating the individual within a broader context by examining their relationships to school, family, peers and their community. More specifically, he stated that his approach to counselling is guided by both feminist theory and narrative therapy. The former involves constantly viewing the issues youths discuss in the larger context of privilege and oppression: “I’m always thinking in a gendered way... What would the impacts of gender be on them experiencing this problem? So, I think that gender is connected to all of our experiences... as well as race, as well as poverty”. While the latter consists of “[separating] the person’s identity from the problem ... These are all cultural experiences. They’re not just psychological, person inventing them/inventing them in their own head”. By connecting the issues youths experience to a broader context, this participant moves away from explanations that focus on individual pathology or diagnosis. Rather his “strength-based perspective” directs attention primarily to youths’ abilities, knowledge, and strengths instead of focusing solely on what

others identified as being “problematic” behaviour. By “developing an alternative story”, this participant helps to facilitate more open discussion by alleviating feelings of shame and distress often exhibited by his clients.

Another participant also discussed youths’ relationship to the broader context of culture, maintaining that one’s connection or relationship to his or her culture is of the utmost importance. Unlike three of the participants, this participant does not work with youth under a “traditional counselling” relationship, but rather her program provides culturally-specific activities for First Nations’ youth. The overarching goal of her program is to help rectify some of the intergenerational impacts of residential schools that destroyed many First Nations People’s cultural practices. In order to promote healthy living, she coordinates a vast array of activities all of which are heavily informed by culture, traditional knowledge, and the youths’ input. These activities include the following: recreational outings, attending a sweat lodge, making dream catchers, bringing in elders, conducting smudging ceremonies and so on. She found that these ceremonies and teachings help prepare youths for life in many different ways because such activities help to “build self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-awareness within the youth so that way they can deal with peer pressure, depression, and [the] cultural genocide that our people have gone through”. She found that most of the youths she works with are “at-risk” mainly due to their history and hopes that by promoting healthy living and connecting them to their culture and their different teachings, her program might help prevent them from becoming criminalized.

The Relationship Between Positive Role Models and Prevention

One participant emphasized the relationship between positive role models and children and youths’ ability to make more informed and healthy choices. While her

agency's mandate was to provide "children in need" with mentors, the mission of the agency is "fostering, facilitating, supporting volunteer-based mentoring programs for children in need" and is focused primarily towards their volunteer members as opposed to the children and youths that they serve. As such, much of her work revolved around directly engaging and recruiting adult community members to become involved in mentorship with these "children in need". Therefore, her interactions with children and youths "in need" occurred more indirectly and consisted of public events where the mentors and youths would get together.

This participant explained that her agency's mentoring services aim to provide a broader goal: "How can we help ensure that these issues don't become bigger, whatever the issue may be? Or that we can prevent, because we hope that our program is preventative". This participant explained that by providing positive male and female adult role models, youths would be provided with recourse when making difficult decisions regarding drug use and sexual activity.

One program offered at this participant's agency is specifically geared towards young women, and emphasizes the importance of positive female mentors on the lives of female youths. However, rather than a one-to-one match between a mentor and a youth, this consists of group discussions and activities with girls and facilitated by two women mentors. This gender-specific program offered for young women has a health-based framework in which discussions and activities focus on promoting healthy living strategies that include elements that addressed physical activity, nutrition, body image, and self-esteem.

The Relationship Between “Risk Factors” and Subsequent Criminal Activity

One participant coordinates a diversion program for both boys and girls who come into conflict with the law at either the pre-charge or post-charge stage. This program is based on the understanding that there is a relationship between the “risk factors” and a youth’s future involvement with criminal activity. The overall goal of his program is “intervening earlier rather than later... ultimately we’re diverting youths away from, hopefully away from, future criminal behaviour and risky behaviours”. This participant relies on the Youth Level of Service /Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) assessment to identify those risk factors. He justifies the use of this assessment tool to assess the youths by stating that it has been well researched and validated; therefore, it is a reliable tool. This assessment tool attempts to determine a youth’s risk of engaging in criminal activities by examining eight different domains of that youth’s life: prior criminal history, family functioning, education and employment, drug use, peer relationships, personality/attitude, and recreation/ leisure time. This participant suggests that the collection of such information through this assessment tool is imperative for understanding a youth’s needs, arguing that: “The big thing that we always advocate, and I say it until I’m blue in the face, is that we have to do an assessment. Yet so many places don’t, you just assume that this is the service that a kid needs”.

While this participant finds that this assessment tool is invaluable for matching up youths’ needs with the most appropriate service(s), concerns have been raised over the use of this standardized assessment tool on young women. In Hannah-Moffat and Maurutto’s (2003) study, they identified several methodological concerns with such assessment tools, such as that they have not been adequately tested on youths in general, let alone on females and non-white youths. Also, their review and research on these assessment tools found that

its criteria for assessing risk and need may produce subtle forms of systemic discrimination against young women and Aboriginal youths. For instance, these tools have the potential to classify young women and Aboriginals as higher risk because of their higher criminogenic needs rather than the actual risks that they pose to others.

The Challenges to Delivering Services

Many difficulties hinder participants' ability to provide services to the girls "at-risk". This section outlines some of the major challenges youth service providers identified, and outlines recommendations for how to improve the delivery of services for youths.

Involuntary vs. Voluntary Youth Participation in Programming

Young women who are perceived as "at-risk" of being, or those who are already, criminalized are often referred and mandated to services, such as counselling. One of the most apparent themes is the issue of voluntary versus involuntary participation in the context counselling and the challenges this poses.

Three of the seven participants provide services to youth primarily in a counselling relationship. Also, while one other participant does not specifically provide front-line counselling services to the young women, he often refers them to two of the participants for counselling. Both of these participants noted that when youths are mandated to seek counselling services from them, they are reluctant to participate. Understanding that the young women have no choice in having to see her for counselling, one participant acknowledges and validates their frustration, and inquires about what they would like to achieve from seeing her. This participant noted that "for most young women, having that

option to decide for themselves of what they want to get out of it leads to having some sort of positive interaction”.

Similarly, another participant noted “often I may have a lot of concerns coming from other people, but for that particular youth, that’s not something they’re ready, or willing, or open to discussing at that time. And so, it’s sort of up to me to really respect that”. The way this participant engages with a youth depends greatly on that youth’s level of interest in seeing him for counselling. For those who are mandated to see him, this participant engages with them in such a way so as to “sort of invite them to look at those other issues in a way that’s non-judgmental”. In addition, he emphasized the importance of having youth determine and name their own problems or needs.

While many of the youths that are referred to these two participants have no interest or choice in seeing them for counselling, they both attempt to provide space for these youths to reclaim some of their power by having them self-determine what issues they would like to discuss. Although these two participants noted youths’ initial reluctance to participate in counselling, they both found ways to work with them.

Moreover, one participant found that having young women mandated to seek counselling can be beneficial because “Having the mandate sometimes gives people the extra structure to get them here and to be consistent about coming”. However, another participant noted that mandating young women does not necessarily have this effect:

There have been a ton of girls that I sent over that just never showed up. So they go back to court. So, it’s sad but the people have their chance right? And you make it as easy as possible for them to make the right choice... We have to measure compliance somehow. So they have to physically be where they need to be.

It seems that mandating young women to counselling services has a limited impact on whether or not they will attend. As this participant’s comment illustrates, a young woman

who fails to attend the services to which she is mandated is deemed “non-compliant”, and her case file will be sent to Crown counsel who will decide whether charges will be laid. What is interesting is that he acknowledged that “Most kids don’t want to do anything right? So of course they’re not going to want to go where they need to go”. While many young women are mandated to such services, for as this participant states “the greater good”, despite the ‘benevolent’ intentions behind such mandates, this often inadvertently results in young women being further criminalized and marginalized because it ignores their lived realities and is setting them up to fail.

Another participant, who also receives many referrals, views the mandating of youths to services as an extremely problematic practice. As such, she advocates for the cessation of the mandates imposed on young women. She finds this practice problematic because:

I believe there is a real lack of understanding about how, not just youth, but people in general need to respond or seek out support. And while we give a certain amount control, autonomy and agency to adults, and make the assumption that they should be seeking their support, choosing their support person, determining whether or not they need support, those same allowances aren’t made for youth, generally. So many programs that are designed for youth are programs that youth are compelled to participate in on some level or another.

For the young women that this participant works with, compelling them to specifically discuss issues of abuse does not work. She finds that before anything that resembles “traditional counselling” work to occur, trust has to be built, which can be especially hard with youths who have been repeatedly abused by the ‘trusted’ adults in their lives (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). As such, for many young women, trust building often takes many years. This participant argues that such mandates for youths exist because service providers do not know how to engage with youths without those components and/or limited human resources does not allow them to devote the necessary time needed to build that trust with young women. Instead, the common practice among youth justice agencies is that “You can

order somebody to go somewhere, and if they don't show up you breach them. Or you inflict whatever punishment your institutionalized services have the power to do".

It is interesting to note that two participants referred to a study that examined the important elements for making positive change within a therapeutic relationship, acknowledging that it is what the client brings to the counselling session that contributes to a positive outcome in counselling. Therefore, it appears that unless youths are motivated to seek counselling and actively engage in it, its ability to affect "positive change" on the young woman and to "prevent" or "intervene" on the risk factors of criminal behaviour are quite limited.

Barriers to Accessibility

There were a plethora of programs and services for "at-risk" youths available in the Ottawa region. However, if youths cannot access such services, they will be of limited use and value for this population. Six of the seven participants identified various issues that create barriers for young women accessing support. One participant found that "The young women I work with don't want 'services'. Like they do, they want support, and they want to be able to access that stuff. But they don't want what we build and call 'services' right?" Likewise, another participant finds that "Traditional services, it doesn't work. So you need to look at individual needs". Three participants all found that young women need practical assistance and support around issues such as obtaining affordable, safe housing and advocacy. Instead, many youth serving agencies have designed services to focus solely on single issues such as anger management, addictions, self-awareness, and the increasing trendy "mental health issues" of youths. And while these issues may be pressing for young women, many of the services and programs they are mandated to attend focus too narrowly on a

specified issue to the exclusion of other factors impacting their options and behaviours. It is for that reason, one participant argues, “youth don't access people's programs because people design programs that are compartmentalized and we as human being are not, as in all or our experiences integrate”. Thus, the manner in which programs and services designed for youths are structured often fails to take into account what youths actually identify as their needs, thereby, making youths reluctant to access the services that are designed for them.

As mentioned earlier, homelessness is a lived reality for many young women the participants work with. However, due to the way in which the emergency shelter and transitional housing programs are designed, it is not accessible for specific groups of young women. For instance, one participant noted that:

There are some young women this isn't a good fit because any kind of the structure they can't do... They are involved in a lot of self-destructive behaviour. One person's needs versus twenty-nine, that's always what we're balancing... And usually the ones that are involved in the sex trade, or sexual exploitation, they have a difficult time here.

As such, some of the most marginalized young women are not able to access services designed for them, and as one participant observed, “marginalized people, again, become too few to count”. While such services are created with the intent of providing young women with housing, because of the way that these services are structured with regards to the guidelines for residing there, it is often not flexible enough to meet their needs.

The participants noted that in order to meet housing needs, housing for youths must take into account young women's experiences and the transient lifestyles, which often consists of “running away” from group homes and “sleeping at someone's house and moving around” a lot, often while being “AWOL⁴” on a breach from probation. While such

⁴ AWOL is the acronym for the phrase “absent without leave” colloquially used to refer to administrative offences, such as “escape custody”, and “unlawfully at large”. (The Department of Justice Canada)

behaviours may bring them into conflict with various authorities, such behavioural patterns are often difficult to abruptly discontinue as it may have helped them survive in the past (Chesney-Lind, 1997). However, shelters and transitional housing programs are designed so that if women disappear, their belongings are removed and they lose their bed or apartment. So, while these are reasonable expectations for a residential facility, one participant found that these standards are not congruent with this population's lifestyle. By disregarding a common coping pattern among young women, this participant argues that young women are frequently caught in a cycle of having to constantly re-establish themselves, making it extremely difficult for them to obtain stability in their lives.

In addition, there are serious implications for a service's inability to meet the needs of a youth. One participant highlighted that:

If a youth has not responded to the 'treatment' or the service, often that youth will - by the system, so it's not like one worker, but it's the way that often I think a lot of the services are set up. If the client is not responding, or not following through, or not showing up or drops out - get constructed as defiant, or oppositional, or resistant, or pathologized is another thing. Some of those things may be somewhat true, but it's sort of a one way relationship. So I think it's important to look at the service.

While services and programs are promoted because it is believed to be beneficial for youths, for some, the services may potentially worsen their situations. Where the failure of a service, program, or perhaps even the 'system' itself is attributed to the youths' shortcoming, it may result in responses that are more punitive.

Moreover, this negative construction of a youth may result in their mistrust of adults, an issue that all of the participants noted and which often sets up barriers for youths to accept the assistance of service providers. One participant noted that:

The idea that a youth is actually going to talk about really significant issues, you know, trauma, loss, self-esteem, you know whatever it is, with an adult, it's quite a gift. It's rare. I think for a youth to be able to do that there has to be trust.

According to one participant in order for young women to be able to trust their worker, they have to be able to control their information that is why her program offers one hundred percent confidentiality, which means "no records, for no time, and for no reason". She strictly adheres to this guiding principle of confidentiality because it is what allows the young women to safely access her program. She argues that "Youth confidentiality is another aspect that is completely challenged. Youth are not accorded those rights... For that reason, youth don't talk". She drew attention to the implications of The Child and Family Services Act (CFSA, 1990), a piece of provincial legislation which regulates interactions with youths under the age of eighteen. This participant found that the CFSA greatly influences how programs are designed in that it has "made service providers work very hard to protect themselves in their programming". She specifically drew attention to the Duty to Report provision which states that if a person suspects that a child has experienced abuse, or is at-risk of experiencing abuse, they must report it. This participant suggests that while the Duty to Report provision was initially brought in to try to protect youth, based on her experiences with young women, this piece of legislation has had significant ramifications in that it further marginalizes youths. This participant stated:

Youth who are trying to talk about problems at home - that they have not yet decided how they totally want to negotiate yet, or what they want to do with them yet, but they need somebody to talk to - those youth won't talk to the service provider because the likelihood of them being taken out the home or going to a group home, which in my view is like the death knell for youth, the likelihood is so high.

As such, some youth do not feel safe or comfortable disclosing difficulties they may be experiencing to service providers because as this participant found "they're subject to reaction" rather than provided support, options and autonomy. Therefore, youths are less likely to seek help from service providers. While all of the participants noted youths' lack of

trust in adults and how that has hindered their ability to develop rapport with youths and effectively provide services for them, aside from one participant, none of the participants could assure youths that they would have complete control over their own information. As a result, youths can become extremely isolated because they are not able to completely disclose all of the difficulties they are facing, thereby, making youths less likely to access the assistance of service providers.

Furthermore, the importance of partnerships was noted extensively by all of the participants as playing a major role in determining whether or not youths have knowledge of, and access to, community-based services. In working at a diversion program, one participant wields a great deal of power in determining which agencies he sends his clients for services. While the youths' needs largely dictate where he sends them, another factor that affects his decisions are the partnerships his program maintains. He stated that "there are agencies that we absolutely love to work with, and then there's agencies that we don't... But sometimes their own philosophies around how to work with youth in a certain way don't always match ours". Such interagency ideological clashes result in youths being denied the opportunity to learn about, access, and potentially benefit from the services of a particular agency.

In addition, the issue of interagency partnerships and access to youths becomes even more complicated when the participants who are from community-based agencies work with young women that are in custodial facilities. One participant found that "Negotiating access to those facilities, negotiating working relationships with anybody who has power in that young woman's life, is an absolutely intricate, fraught with peril kind of dance". Similarly, another participant found that to be the case when she provided outreach and support to young women who were in a secure custody facility. She found workers within that

custodial environment to have a “more paternalistic kind of approach to who the girls might see or not see”. Clashes of this nature often resulted in a total loss of access to youth.

Lastly, extremely limited financial resources greatly affect what types of services and programs are available for youths. All of the participants identified lack of funding as a major barrier to providing effective services for young women and youths in general. While the YCJA emphasizes diverting youth out of the court system and into community-based services, one participant found the implementation of this piece of legislation problematic because:

First of all, the money wasn't put up to do that on the level that is was supposed to be done. And then second, where money was available and where that was a focus of implementing the YCJA, rather than looking to existing resources the youth were already accessing in the community, the Ministries created new ones... But what that does is it again, it creates a closed-community for youth. It's not actual, real community integration. It's only integration with youth service providers in specially designed facilities, in specially designed programs.

Not only are existing community resources not being harnessed to assist youths, all of the participants noted that their programs were already working at capacity and do not have the financial means to expand. The inability for these programs to hire more staff has major repercussions on what services are available for youths. One participant stated that with his diversion program, he found that “the police are holding back on referrals because they know we can't really manage them”. For two other participants, the limited amount of funding has meant that youths are waiting long periods of time to receive services. For another participant, it has meant that the types and amount of culturally-specific activities that she can offer are extremely restricted.

Furthermore, the limited funding towards community-based programs has meant that when project grants become available, it creates what one participant described as “political

challenges” within the youth service community where “Sometimes programs will pop up or get funded by another source and they kind of work in direct competition”.

This section discussed some of the main issues that pose challenges for the participants in their work providing services and programming for youth. These challenges stem from the youths themselves, individual youth workers, the youth serving community, society and various pieces of youth related legislation all of which greatly impact how the issues which increase a youth’s “risk” of becoming criminalized are understood and addressed. Moreover, numerous issues were identified which hindered youths’ ability to access the services that are specifically designed for population.

Recommendations for Improving Services for At-Risk Young Women & Youth

The following section outlines some of the general recommendations that participants identified as important for improving the services delivered to young women and youths.

First, unanimously the youth service providers recommended that the funding provided towards community-based services for youths needs to be increased.

Second, many of the participants noted the damaging effect labels such as “non-compliant” and “resistant” can have on youth since such negative perceptions of them greatly affect how they were treated. As noted in the literature, there is a history of negatively labelling young women as illustrated with the disproportional use of “status offences” such as “incorrigibility”, “sexual immorality” to warrant the intervention of law enforcement and child welfare. While “status offences” have long been decriminalized, contemporary labels such as “non-compliant” and “resistant” reflect what Reitsma-Street (1999) argues are the new “status-like” administrative offences which continue to

disproportionately affect young women. As such, all of the participants emphasized the need for changing how society generally views youth. One participant recommended that people “get to know some youth before you make some decisions about them, or pass judgement about them... The community needs to stop thinking of them as the bad kids”.

Third, they noted the importance of a supportive working relationship. One participant emphasized the importance of respect and dignity and “to recognize each person's authority in terms of their own life”, which translates to not telling people what they should be doing, but rather helping them identify what they want and supporting them in their goals. Another participant found that “you have to be non-judgmental, and be open, and you have to basically speak to the youth as if they're people”. Being non-judgmental allows youths to talk about issues they may be experiencing with service providers. Also, another participant emphasized the importance of collaboration within the working relationship and stated that:

You also got to be firm so the youth knows that you might have to call them on something or that you're inviting them to be responsible because you are working together right. I'm not going to work on someone, and I don't want the youth to think that I'm trying to work on them to try and, you know, get them to do this, get them to do that. They're probably going to tell me to screw off. So working with, but we're going to define what's that going to mean you know.

In addition, one participant recommended that youth service providers incorporate the following into their work with youths:

Being honest, being direct, getting comfortable with not being a friend, not being a parent but being a good support and a good role model... so just the other under rated piece is the whole effect of listening. You know really trying to understand where that youth is coming from, because in order to support them we need to understand them.

Fourth, practitioners need to demonstrate positive role modelling and as one participant stated:

It's really important how the worker carries themselves right? It's because you're acting as a role model... You have to carry yourself a certain way in order to earn the trust of the youth. And you don't want to preach to them that you don't do.

Lastly, in regards to addressing youth crime, one participant argued for some honest discussion on how the policies currently in place play out in practice. She argued that:

We are criminalizing the conditions of being teenage... We have to look at what we designated as criminal behaviour and also what we are designating as the least interventionist approaches. Probation orders, twelve month probation orders are standard, and they are considered low intervention, and they're considered not tremendously punitive. That only works if you don't consider the character of a teenager and what a teenager is in a process of doing between the ages of twelve and twenty or whatever it is. Standardized probationary conditions, the vast majority of them, are all things youth are developmentally challenging as part of a natural and actually very important developmental process.

Delinquency programming has largely ignored the issue of gender. A number of researchers have drawn attention to how young women's experiences and "risk" factors differs from their male counterparts. As such, these researchers propose the move towards gender-specific programming developed with the understanding of young women's unique situations and problems (Acoca, 1999; Belknap & Holsinger, 2006; Bloom, Owen, Piper Deschenes, & Rosenbaum, 2002; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). This study found that "at-risk" and criminalized young women's lives are characterized by violence, family conflict and/or fragmentation, institutionalization, drugs and alcohol use, academic failure and health problems which are consistent with the growing body of feminist research on female delinquency. Furthermore, their gender, race, and class often shape young women's experiences of these issues.

It was apparent that young women's needs essentially consisted of the following: safety, shelter, stability, support, and security. While the participants all had different mandates and approaches, they all sought to address at least one of these aspects. What became clear was that their efforts to assist young women, or youths in general, was often hampered by many factors. Thus, in order to more effectively assist youths, we as a

community must examine how we perceive girls at risk and the issues they may be experiencing, scrutinize what we are building as “services”, assess whether or not these services really meet the needs of the youths, listen to what youths are naming as their needs, acknowledge when things are ineffectual, and strive to make improvements when there are discrepancies.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the types of community-based programs and services offered for “at-risk” young women within the city of Ottawa. The participants’ perceptions of the issues young women experience confirm many of the common themes found in the existing feminist research on young women and crime, such that their lives are often characterized by experiences of violence, family conflict and/or dysfunction, institutionalization, homelessness, drug and alcohol use issues, academic difficulties, and physical and mental health issues.

While the participants identified many of the same common themes in the lives of the young women that they work with, the viewpoints that underlie each participant’s understanding of these issues greatly affects how she, or he, made sense of these issues, subsequently influencing how each individual approached their work in providing services. For instance, the participants that stated that they subscribed to a feminist perspective emphasized the importance of relations of power within the young women’s lives. As such, these youth service providers attempted to provide space for the young women that they worked with to reclaim some power in their lives. This primarily entailed having the young women identify what issues they wanted to discuss and receive assistance with; for one youth service provider, this went as far as advocating on behalf of young women to not be compelled to participate in any services.

Moreover, participants emphasized the importance of understanding the relationship between young women’s behaviours, and the reactions they elicit, with various structural

factors such as gender, race, culture, age, ability, sexual orientation, and class and how these often intersect and play a significant role in shaping young women's experiences.

Aside from one participant's program, which offered culturally-specific recreational programs for Aboriginal youths, all of the remaining participants co-ordinated programs which "at-risk" youths were often referred to, and sometimes mandated to participate in. Many of the participants noted problematic aspects of this practice, namely mandating youths to seek services resulting in those youths being reluctant to engage with them. Only one participant adamantly opposed mandating youths to participate in services and advocated for the cessation of such mandates. In contrast, all of the other participants attempted to negotiate with youths within such mandates.

The types of services that the participants of this study offered to young women included the following: individual counselling, discussion and counselling groups, housing assistance, advocacy, recreational activities, referrals, mentoring, generalized practical assistance and advocacy (e.g. writing supportive letters). Three of the participants work at agencies that specifically provide services for women only and offered programs and services specifically for female youths. These three agencies explicitly state that their services are grounded in feminist understandings. Another participant's agency provided services to both male and female children and youths but also had programs specifically for female youths. As such, four of the participants offered programs that were specifically designed for young women and often incorporated many of the gender-specific elements noted in the literature on such programming.

These programs differed from traditional gender-neutral programs in that they had female only staff co-ordinating the programs and providing its services. As such, they provided female role models and women only spaces. In addition, these participants

emphasized the importance of understanding young women's experiences within the context of power structures. For example, these youth service providers often explored how violence affects young women's behaviours, and how they have learned to cope with such experiences. However, one similarity amongst all of the programs was that they face major barriers in their ability meet the needs of young women and of youths in general. Many of these barriers, such as the practice of mandating youth to participate in counselling and inflexible program structures, often resulted in youths not being able to access the services that are specifically designed for this population.

The results of this study suggest that "at-risk" and criminalized young women experience a multitude of difficult issues in their lives. Also, while many of the community-based programs and services offered to them are well intentioned, these programs and services are often limited, for various reasons, in their ability to address the issues that these young women are facing. Moreover, because services for young women continue to focus on assisting the individual, they do little to change the broader structural forces, the different systems, and the organizational practices that play a major role in oppressing young women.

The findings of this research supports Chesney-Lind's proposed theory of female delinquency (1989; 1997) which takes into account young women's unique experiences. She emphasizes the importance of examining the role that the youth justice system plays in the criminalization of "at-risk" young women's survival strategies. With regards to Belknap and Holsinger's (2008) theory of young women's gendered "pathways to offending", many of the issues that they identified in criminalized young women's lives were also confirmed in this research study. However, they emphasize that young women's offending often begins with their victimization, which often leads to them running away from home, and then once they are street-involved, they resort to criminalized activities in order to survive. Belknap

and Holsinger (2008) emphasize that at any point in this sequence young women have the potential to be criminalized. This study's findings suggest that young women's patterns are often cyclical, rather than linear; but similarly at any point in that cycle, they can experience criminalization.

Furthermore, the results of this study suggest that young women can be criminalized for a whole range of behaviours, some of which have more to do with the failure of different "systems"; specifically, the manner in which youth services are structured often creates conditions that are incredibly difficult for youths to successfully navigate through. Hence, further research is necessary to critically examine how youth services are designed and structured and to explore the significance, for example, of youth justice practices and how these practices shapes young women's criminalization.

In addition, the implications of policy addressing youths are also another important area needing further inquiry. For example, while many participants found the YCJA to be a marked improvement from the previous YOA on how the youth justice system responds to youths, they also found that the implementation of the YCJA was deficient. Namely, the importance placed on the role of community-based initiatives in addressing the underlying issues that increase youths' risk of engaging in criminal activities is often not reflected by the amount of funding awarded to such endeavours. The availability of community-based initiatives and the extent of the services they can provide depend largely on the amount of funding various levels of government invest. The participants unanimously identified the lack of funding for community-based programs as a major barrier to delivering services.

Feminist works have had important contributions in the research area of "at-risk" and criminalized young women by drawing attention to the importance of developing delinquency theory and prevention and interventions that reflect young women's lived

realities. The current move towards providing gender-specific services for young women has brought greater attention to the adequacy and efficacy of traditional mainstream programming by addressing the experiences faced by young women. Further research seems needed on gender-specific services for young women within the Canadian context. In addition, research involving young women who have participated in such programs and services is important for shedding more light on this issue.

In conclusion, community-based programs and services play a major role in addressing the issues and behaviours of “at-risk” young women; although, such services primarily work at the level of the individual and have little influence on changing the problematic structural factors affecting young women’s lived realities. This study’s findings suggest that gender-specific programs and services for young women offer promising directions in that they seek to address the long history of female youths’ needs being neglected. Such programs and services are designed to better reflect the lived realities of young women and may therefore more adequately meet their needs. While it would be naive to believe that such gender-specific programming efforts offer a panacea for the difficulties that many “at-risk” and criminalized young women experience, such initiatives draw attention to the need for political understandings of young women’s statuses in a socially stratified society. There has been a long history of responding to “at-risk” young women as if they were in need of “fixing” and, therefore, “programming”. It appears that for community initiatives to effectively address the perceived problems that put young women “at-risk” of engaging in criminalized behaviours, the challenge is twofold. Young women should be provided with the supports to assist them through the difficulties they may be experiencing while concomitantly maintaining an emphasis on the politicization of these

issues experienced by young women by challenging the structural forces and systemic practices that promote gender, racial, and class inequality.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

As a youth service provider for a community-based agency, you are often involved in close working relationships with youth; thus, you will have insightful knowledge on the experiences and the corresponding needs of at-risk youth populations. I am interested in hearing about your work experiences, in particular, your experiences working with young women.

1. Youth worker background:

- a.) What was it that attracted you to this line of youth services?
- b.) Could you talk to me about how you first became involved with this agency?
- c.) How long have you been employed at this current agency?
- d.) How long have you been employed as a youth worker in general?

2. Agency Information:

- a.) Often the services offered within a program depend on the overarching mandate and principles guiding that particular agency. What is the mandate and the guiding principles of the agency for which you are employed?

3. Program information:

- a.) What issues or factors are addressed by your program?
- b.) What types of interventions/services are you currently providing these youth/young women through this program? In other words, do you provide counselling, skills training etc.?

4. Experiences of at-risk female youths:

- a.) Based on your work experiences, what are some of the common experiences of these youth/young women which, in your opinion, that put them at risk of coming into conflict with the law?
- b.) Based on their experiences, what do you believe to be the most important needs for these youth/young women?

5. Diversity and Culture:

This study seeks to examine the extent to which the programs and services available meet the needs of youth from diverse backgrounds, cultures, races, ethnicities and abilities.

- a.) How does the services offered through your program address culture, race/ethnicity and other issues relating to diversity?

6. Working relationship with youth/young women:

- a.) How do you, as a youth service provider, conceptualize your working relationship with the youth/young women? That is, do you find it enjoyable, rewarding, challenging etc.? How so?

7. Comparing at-risk female with at-risk male youths:

- a.) Seeing how your service users consist of both males and females, do you find that there are some distinct similarities in regards to life experiences and/or behaviours between these two groups? And if so, could you give me some examples of these similarities?
- b.) Are there any distinct differences between males and females that stand out for you?

8. Barriers to program delivery:

- a.) What do you find to be the most problematic barriers/challenges to your program(s) and the services you provide? (e.g. funding, etc.)
- b.) You would also have the most in-depth knowledge of what types of services are still missing for these youth/young women. In your opinion, what additional types of services do you feel are still missing and needed which would have a positive influence on the youth you work with?

9. Recommendations for policy and practice:

- a.) Drawing on your experience working with at-risk youth/young women, what are some suggestions you could provide in regards to how this segment of the population is dealt with under policy.
- b.) What are some suggestions of “good practices” that you could provide for other youth service providers working with at-risk youth populations?

Summarize what was covered in the interview**Exit**

I greatly appreciated you taking the time out of your day to participate in an interview for this research study. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, my supervisor, or the University of Ottawa’s Ethics Office. Once the transcript of your interview is complete, a hard copy will be provided for you to review. An electronic copy of the final report will be provided for you at your request. You are welcome to make any alterations to your interview transcript, and any feedback and participation you would like to provide in the final report are welcome. I sincerely thank you for your participation.

Appendix B

Agency Permission Form

Research Title: Examining the Community-Based Programs Available for At-Risk Girls

Co-Investigator

Jamie Kwong
 Department of Criminology
 Faculty of Social Sciences
 University of Ottawa

Supervisor

Dr. Sylvie Frigon
 Department of Criminology
 Faculty of Social Sciences
 University of Ottawa

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine and describe the community-based programs, and the services they provide, for at-risk girls within the City of Ottawa. Confidentiality and anonymity are assured to all participants. Thus, the names of the participants will not be recorded in the final report. Participants will be referred to by a pseudonym. Furthermore, the names of the agencies where they are currently employed will also not be mentioned.

The Research Ethics Board requires that written permission from participating institutions be obtained prior to the commencement of interviews with any of their employees. For any information requests or complaints about the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
 Tel.: (613) 562-5841
 Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

I, _____, the director of
 _____ hereby give permission to Ms. Kwong to
 access this organization for the purposes of conducting an interview with
 _____.

Agency Director's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Consent Form

Research Title: Examining the Community-Based Programs Available for At-Risk Girls

Co-Investigator

Jamie Kwong
Department of Criminology
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Ottawa

Supervisor

Dr. Sylvie Frigon
Department of Criminology
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Ottawa

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine and describe the community-based programs, and the services they provide, for at-risk girls within the City of Ottawa.

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Jamie Kwong and Dr. Sylvie Frigon.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of attending one interview session. It will last approximately one hour in length, during which I will be asked to answer a set of questions pertaining to my field of work. The one interview will be scheduled to take place at _____, on _____, 2008, at ___:___AM/PM).

Risks: My participation in this study will entail that I volunteer my work history and experiences which may cause me to feel emotional stress as a result of disclosing such personal experiences. I may also incur other social repercussions as a result of my participation in this study. My colleagues may pass judgment on my participation. I may also incur other inconveniences. Although this interview will only last one hour in length, the process altogether may be very time consuming. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks.

The researcher has outlined what will be expected of my participation and that following the interview, time will be allotted so I can debrief with the researcher any emotional reactions that I may have as a result of the interview. The researcher stated that she will provide a list of local resources should I need additional counselling and support. In order to minimize the amount of time consumed as a result of my participation in an interview, strict time constraints will be respected so as to not exceed the one hour time frame by more than 10 minutes.

Benefits: My participation in this study will benefit me because it gives me the opportunity to voice my experiences within this field of front line work with young women. My participation may have the benefit of drawing attention to what is working and what is not working within the programs provided to girls. This may contribute to the advancement of knowledge by drawing attention to the gaps found between research and practice and may spark further research into this area.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share with her will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents of my interview will only be used for the purposes of this research project and that my confidentiality will be

respected. The researcher has assured me that any data collected from my interview will be kept in a safe and secure location, and will only be accessible to the co-investigator and her supervisor. The researcher has assured me that my anonymity will be protected by not recording my name or any identifying markers during the interview process or within the research report. Instead, I will be referred throughout the research process by a pseudonym.

Conservation of data: The researcher has informed me that the data collected from the interview (audio tapes, transcripts, electronic data, hard copy data, and research notes) will be kept under lock and key with the co-investigator and will be accessible only to the co-investigator and her supervisor. All data will be conserved for a period of five years following the publication of the research report. Following which, all the data will be deleted and destroyed.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all the data gathered until the time of my withdrawal will be omitted and destroyed.

Acceptance: I, _____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Jamie Kwong of the Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences, at the University of Ottawa, which is under the supervision of Dr. Sylvie Frigon.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor.

If I have any information requests or complaints about the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-5841
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: *(Signature)* Date: *(Date)*

Witness *(needed in the case where a participant is illiterate, blind, etc.):*
(Signature) Date: *(Date)*

Researcher's signature: *(Signature)* Date : *(Date)*