

**Blossoming Bit by Bit: Exploring the Role of Theatre Initiatives in the  
Lives of Criminalized Women**

By

Elise Merrill

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the role of theatre in the lives of criminalized women. It seeks to better understand the ways in which theatre initiatives can be used as a tool for participants through various means, such as potentially being a form of self-expression, or a way to gain voice. This exploration was facilitated by conducting a case study of the Clean Break Theatre Company, a theatre company for criminalized women in London, England. Data was collected through performance and course observations and interviews with twelve women. The final themes shape the exploration as participants identify the importance of self expression through theatre, and its ability to aid in personal transformation or growth. Theatre initiatives are important because they create a unique lens into the experiences of these women, as well as being used as a tool for change in their lives.

**Keywords:** theatre initiatives, criminalized women, arts-based practices, Clean Break Theatre Company, interdisciplinary research, feminist framework

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*It is like a creative release. You need to be in that creativity, because out there it's just too painful. And we've seen life, we've felt life, we've been....had the door shut in our faces...you know, all that stuff, you know - what we've been through. And then you come here and it's like: "Right. Let it all out." And it's so healing... – Nicky<sup>1</sup> (a student graduate of Clean Break)*

This excerpt is from interviews I conducted at a theatre company for criminalized women. Nicky's quote exemplifies some of the struggles of criminalized women, and articulates one of the ways in which theatre can impact participants. With this springboard to my thesis in mind, the following chapter describes what problem is to be explored within this thesis, and why such an exploration is necessary. I begin by outlining the general area of concern, which is arts-based initiatives for criminalized populations. The following section then depicts the specific problem that will be examined in this thesis, which focuses on theatre initiatives. I then delineate the purpose of this research project, and pose my research question. Lastly, the final subsections in this introduction explore the justification, significance, and potential contribution of this particular thesis.

### Area of Concern

The area of concern for my thesis project is arts-based initiatives for criminalized individuals. *The Prison Arts Coalition* describes prison arts programming as potentially including “workshops, projects, and courses” that are arts-based for prisoners (Mer & Jason, “Programs”: para. 1). However, for the purposes of this project, I will not be limiting the scope of my research specifically to prisoners. This project will involve not just prisoners, but also individuals who are considered to be ‘in conflict

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<sup>1</sup> The names of all participants cited in this thesis are pseudonyms to protect their identities.

with the law,' or 'criminalized'<sup>2</sup>. Arts-based initiatives can explore subjects such as “creative writing, poetry, visual art, dance, drama, and music” (Mer & Jason, “Programs”: para. 1). Arts-based initiatives can also potentially be multi-disciplinary, meaning that multiple art forms can be combined and explored together (Mer & Jason, “Programs”). For my thesis project in particular, I will be exploring the role of theatre initiatives for criminalized individuals. This exploration leads me to the particular problem that will be examined in the construction of this thesis.

### **Problem to be Examined**

The specific problem to be examined is the lack of initiatives for criminalized women in Canada, so that they may experience important aspects of growth such as personal development and empowerment. In Kendall’s (1993) study with women prisoners in Canada, the participants voice a need for more therapeutic programs, such as arts programs, to regain a sense of control and self-worth. Over two decades after this research was conducted, theatre initiatives for criminalized populations are still extremely underdeveloped. Currently there is a theatre company for prisoners in Canada at the William Head Institution in British Columbia, but this is a penitentiary which is only for men. At this point in time, there are no long term theatre programs offered to criminalized women in Canada.

However, in London, England there is a prominent theatre company called the Clean Break Theatre Company. Clean Break is an independent company that offers services and courses to women who have come into contact with the penal system, or who are at risk of offending. For this company, being in conflict with the law entails

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<sup>2</sup> Please refer to ‘Definitions of Terms & Concepts’ in the Methodology chapter for definitions of these concepts.

that the individual “may be in contact with the police, have been cautioned or sentenced for an offence, are on remand, on a community order, on bail, on license, in prison or known to a Youth Offending Team” (Clean Break: EP). The Clean Break Theatre Company was created in London, England in 1979 by two women prisoners and it has seen much success in aiding criminalized women since its inception. Currently, this company offers free courses under the headings of: Performance, Behind the Scenes, Writing, and Personal Development (Clean Break Theatre Company, 2014). Women in conflict with the law sign up for weekly courses that are semester based, and run by female personnel at Clean Break. Clean Break is an excellent resource for further exploring the role of theatre in the lives of criminalized women, and studying this company will aid me in fulfilling the purpose of this research project.

### **Purpose of Research Project**

There are many purposes within my research project on theatre initiatives for criminalized women. I am primarily interested in better understanding the experiences of criminalized women through theatre, as well as seeing how theatre initiatives can be used as a tool to potentially help these women. Theatre initiatives may offer a unique and important method through which women can express themselves and find ways to work through their own experiences. My research project includes the following objectives: a) to explore, through theatre initiatives, how women are situated in relation to their own experiences of being criminalized; and b) to see what impact theatre initiatives have on the lives of women participants who are criminalized.

The secondary purpose of this study is to academically contribute to this field of knowledge. By conducting a study on theatre initiatives for these women, a discussion

could begin in Canada regarding the benefits of theatre initiatives for criminalized women. Both theatre initiatives for criminalized women and research on this topic are vastly missing a Canadian context. I am hoping that this thesis project could open the doors for further projects regarding this particular topic. These objectives lead me into the major research question for this thesis.

### **Major Research Question**

For my thesis research, I am asking the following question: “How do theatre initiatives help to explore the individual and collective experiences of criminalized women, and what impact can these initiatives have on their lives?” To find answers to this question, my focus goes to Clean Break, a current and prominent company which undertakes theatre initiatives for criminalized women. With a feminist lens and an interdisciplinary focus, this thesis will make unique and relevant contributions to the field of criminology.

### **Criminological Significance & Contribution of Research Project**

Part of the relevance of this thesis exists within the fact that, worldwide, women are the fastest growing prison population (Hotton Mahony, 2011; Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, 2006; Balfour, 2006a). Women prisoners largely commit non-violent offences, they pose less risk to the community when released, and they are less likely to reoffend in contrast to male prison populations (Hotton Mahony, 2011; Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, 2006).<sup>3</sup> Hughes (1998) identifies prison regimes as “ineffective, discriminatory and oppressive” (44). Also, Cox and

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<sup>3</sup> Please refer to the section ‘Women in prison in Canada’ in the Literature Review chapter for further details.

Gelsthorpe (2012) describe how imprisonment can deny an individual their own “potential to live a meaningful and purposeful life” (257).

Canada’s Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women (TFFSW) released a report in 1990 entitled *Creating Choices*. This report is essential in that it researches the needs of women prisoners in Canada extensively. It also specifies in its findings a long-term goal of prevention, which entails working to eliminate factors that lead to criminalized activity before it occurs (TFFSW, 1990). *Creating Choices* argues that long-term solutions for criminalized women in Canada hinge on community partnerships (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Theatre initiatives for criminalized women in Canada can possibly offer a community resource which grapples with the concept of prevention by aiding women in their journey for growth and purpose.

Having criminalized populations practice the arts is considered a means through which their human potential can once again be tapped (Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2012). The arts are recognized by researchers as an important tool that can change lives through its ability to expand our capacity for empathy, by offering an opportunity for cognitive growth, through the creation of social connections, and through its ability to express widespread social issues (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004). It is also through the arts that the public can have the opportunity to “promote progressive change on the socio-penal front” (Cheliotis, 2012: 6).

However, research is currently limited regarding the effects of theatre initiatives for criminalized populations (Tocci, 2007). Interviews with participants in such programs are sparse and the long-term effects of theatre initiatives remains largely unknown (Tocci, 2007). Tocci (2007) also identifies how existing interviews with

criminalized participants of theatre programs are primarily examples of the most successful individuals in these programs. With such biased and limited data, it is difficult to analyze this form of programming at this time. Thus, I am motivated to conduct further research with criminalized women who have participated in theatre initiatives to better understand its potential as a long-term resource.

The following thesis explores the many problems, objectives, and intended contributions in relation to my research question. Within the Methodology chapter, all aspects of my research methods and choices will also be addressed. The following Literature Review and Theory chapters will merge together within the Data Analysis chapter to create a holistic discussion of the findings of my research. Final reflections drawing from these discussions will culminate within the Conclusion chapter as well.



*The reception area at Clean Break.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> All photos of Clean Break in this thesis are taken by myself during an on-site visit in the summer of 2013.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

The following chapter reviews existing literature on arts-based practices, theatre initiatives, and criminalized women in Canada. The discussion is shaped and directed by two separate headings within this literature review. The first section looks at the historical background of the problem and describes the current state of knowledge. It begins by identifying the pervasive mentality that no programming works for prisoners, and then delves into various ways in which studies have been conducted on arts and theatre-based initiatives for criminalized populations. Studies which assess the societal and individual impacts of the arts are explored, and a personal testament from a prisoner is included as well. Program evaluations of various arts-based initiatives internationally are then discussed. Following this, the lens shifts to the state of criminalized women in Canada, and this section includes a program evaluation of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) for women prisoners as well. I then describe aspects of history for Canadian women prisoners and pinpoint where arts initiatives fit within CSC's current programming for women. The second section of this review describes where this project fits within the existing literature, and identifies the potential contribution that this thesis can make to it.

### Historical Background to Problem & Current State of Knowledge

**'Nothing works' & challenges.** In 1975, Douglas Lipton, Robert Martinson, and Judith Wilks released their report entitled *The Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment: A Survey of Treatment Evaluation Studies*. In this report Lipton et al. (1975) first established the now common notion that 'nothing works' in corrections regarding the

rehabilitation of prisoners. The result of this report in North America has been a clear degradation of rehabilitation models as they struggle to maintain support and funding (Tocci, 2007; Pratt, Gau, & Franklin, 2011). Since that time, in the United Kingdom, more current barriers have also arisen for criminalized populations. In 2009 Jack Straw, who was the Justice Secretary at the time, implemented a Prison Service Instruction (PSI). This PSI forbids any “recreational, social, or educational activity” within prison unless it meets a “public acceptability test” (Straw in James, 2009). These shifts in perspectives regarding programs for criminalized individuals have made arts alternatives struggle for legitimacy from both prison administrators and the general public (Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2012).

Engaging with materials on the topic of arts initiatives with criminalized populations is vastly varied and, at times, presents challenges. One of the first road blocks to reviewing the literature on this topic is to identify if works are written by arts practitioners who have worked firsthand with arts programming for criminalized individuals at some point in their lives. Works and collections such as Thompson (1998), Mullen (1999), Trounstone (2001), and Shailor (2011) depict detailed, firsthand experiences conducting arts initiatives with criminalized populations. However, the personal investment of arts practitioners directly involved in the programs they are assessing is problematic because of the deep level of entrenchment within the area which they are researching. Also, McAviney (2011) and Hughes (2005) echo my own review of the literature in stating that the majority of documentation of theatre work in relation to criminalized individuals takes place within prisons, and these discussions

often take place around programs in the USA and UK. This will be evident in the following sections, which look at previous arts-based studies.

**Previous studies: societal impact of the arts.** One of the ways in which researchers work to give legitimacy to arts-based initiatives is through conducting cost-benefit analyses. McAvinchey (2011) describes how cost-benefit analyses became popular for assessing arts practices with criminalized populations. She argues that these types of studies were conducted because “anecdotal evidence needed to be re-presented in a way which spoke to both the financial and the political concerns of sceptics” (McAvinchey, 2011: 75). Two dominant reports include: *An Evaluation of the Arts-In-Corrections Program of the California Department of Corrections* by Brewster (1983), and *Unlocking Value: The Economic Benefit of the Arts in Criminal Justice* by Johnson, Keen, and Pritchard (2011). These reports translate a very qualitative subject into quantitative data to prove, primarily through numeric data, the value of arts-based practices for criminalized populations. Another prominent report on this topic includes Hayter and Pierce (2009), who assess how the arts can increase an area’s economic development. However, this report more generally assesses various arts practices, and therefore lacks a focus on criminalized populations.

Brewster (1983) evaluates the California Department of Corrections’ Arts-In-Corrections Program (which is also known as the AIC Program). Through the quantification of arts-based programming contributions, Brewster (1983) finds that, in the four institutes reviewed, \$228,522 USD is produced through the AIC Program in one year. Brewster (1983) also finds that the AIC Program improves the “attitude and behavior of inmates,” as seen in the “reduced number of disciplinary reports among

those participating in the Program” (29). Fewer disciplinary reports were given to 75% of AIC Program participants at the California Medical Facility and 80.6% at the Correctional Training Facility in Soledad (Brewster, 1983). Here we see value in an arts program based on its ability to quell the behaviour of prisoners who are serving their sentences.

Johnson et al. (2011) assess three arts organizations that work with criminalized populations, and this report explores the costs and benefits of using the arts to help rehabilitate people who have offended or are at risk of offending. This study was conducted because “arts charities and funders are increasingly interested in assessing the cost effectiveness of interventions” (Johnson et al., 2011: 5). Also, being a study in the UK, Johnson et al. (2011) explain how “the Ministry of Justice last year announced plans for using payment-by-results contracts more widely in the criminal justice sector” (5).

The Clean Break Theatre Company was one of the companies selected for analysis. Researchers quantified the economic benefits of the following outcomes for women after participating in Clean Break: “not re-offending”; “being in employment”; and “attaining a qualification at a more advanced level” (Johnson et al., 2011: 14). After this quantification, researchers estimate that “for every pound invested into the program, 4.57 pounds of value is created for society over one year” (Johnson et al., 2011: 2).

Although both of these reports conduct cost-benefit analyses, they emerge nearly 30 years apart and from different parts of the world. Brewster’s (1983) report is based off of arts-based practices in general in the United States, and is one of the

original reports on practices such as these for prisoners. Johnson et al. (2011) investigates this topic in the United Kingdom, and this report more specifically relates to my research project by investigating into the Clean Break Theatre Company, which focuses on both the role of theatre and criminalized women. In the following section, there is a shift in focus from the societal impact of the arts, to exploring its individual impact.

**Previous studies: individual impact of the arts.** Another way in which this research topic is discussed is through case studies and qualitative research practices. Rather than looking at the societal impact of arts-based practices for criminalized populations, some studies focus on the individual impact of such practices. For example, in *The Proscenium Cage*, Tocci (2007) conducts case studies of prison theatre programs in the United States, and gathers responses from prisoners after they participate in these programs. Tocci's (2007) responses include participants stating that they felt useful and respected, as well as secure enough to make changes for their betterment, and that they were able to recognize the power of self evaluation in these programs. They also finished the program feeling more intelligent and better able to understand others (Tocci, 2007). While Tocci's (2007) research specifically assesses programs that take place physically within prison, his focus on individual growth as a whole is still relevant to this research project, which will explore a company that functions outside of prison walls.

Tocci (2007) outlines current forms of programming that are most prevalent in prisons in the United States. These programs include: "psychiatric counseling, substance abuse programs, literacy classes, secondary educational opportunities, and

training in (marginally) skilled labor” (Tocci, 2007: 15). However, Tocci (2007) speculates that the specific importance of prison theatre programming over other forms of programming is that it relies on the necessary aspect of human interaction while in prison. He states that “much rehabilitative and job-skills training tend to isolate the convicts in solitary endeavors,” and that “even the most commonly found arts activities of drawing, painting, creative writing, or reading are wholly individual pursuits. They lack the one essential feature for resocialization: namely, actual socialization” (Tocci, 2007: 2). These case studies assert the specific importance of human interaction for criminalized populations, and identify how theatre practices can assist in regaining such social skills.

Another group of case studies are conducted in Scotland by Tett, Anderson, McNeill, Overy, and Sparks (2012). Tett et al. (2012) research prisoners who participate in arts interventions within three different prisons, and all of the prisoners involved are male. This team of researchers explore how the arts aid prisoners with learning and literacy, as well as with their own rehabilitation (Tett et al., 2012). The arts-based initiatives used in these prisons are organized by local professionals with firsthand experience in music, opera, and theatre (Tett et al., 2012). Tett et al. (2012) describe a unification of these various arts practices because all of the artists involved focus “on co-working with the participants to produce a high quality performance that reflected the issues and concerns of prisoners” (176).

These case studies are composed of interviews with all groups involved, feedback session forms, and records of the behaviour of the prisoners involved (Tett et al., 2012). Tett et al.’s (2012) findings include identifying a change in negative attitudes

towards learning in participants, participants feeling more confident, and also gaining self-esteem. These researchers also noted the creation of an 'active learning culture,' as well as arts initiatives instigating a means through which prisoners can work 'collaboratively and responsibly' (Tett et al., 2012). Prisoners involved describe arts initiatives as showing them that they were able to succeed at something, and possess ownership over a final product that they mutually work toward (Tett et al., 2012). Participants also found that arts initiatives were different from other programs in prison because they had to "take responsibility for 'the group as a whole [whereas usually] in here you look after yourself first'" (Tett et al., 2012: 179).

Tett et al. (2012) describe various ways in which arts practices potentially impact the participants involved. Similar to Tocci's (2007) discussion, Tett et al. (2012) pinpoint social development, the building of relationships, and trust as important results for participants of arts-based initiatives. Tett et al. (2012) also explore how participants challenge previous conceptions of identity because "the arts projects seemed to constructively challenge and disrupt the negative identities that they had internalised" (183). However, Tett et al. (2012) acknowledge a shortcoming of isolated, short-term arts programs in that having such brief involvement cannot simply alter the overall well-being of an individual. Arts-based interventions that come in for a short-term project and leave cannot solely lead to rehabilitation, but they rather "can help to foster change processes" (Tett et al., 2012: 182).

Looking at the case studies of Tocci (2007) and Tett et al. (2012), I am able to see how qualitative case studies are discussed regarding arts initiatives within prisons. These case studies differ from my own in that they look at arts practices which are

short term, take place within prisons, and exist predominantly for men. Tett et al.'s (2012) critique of such projects being so short-term motivates me to expand on this research by producing a case study which assesses the affects to long term arts practices outside of prison walls. Case studies provide thick descriptions of the experiences of others, and, in the following section, the literature is even more intimate regarding firsthand experiences of theatre practices for criminalized populations.

**The impact of theatre: a personal testament.** Another way in which the role of theatre is discussed in the lives of criminalized individuals is through a personal testament. In *The Prisoner's Voice*, UK prisoner Joe White (1998) writes a testimony of his experiences so far practicing theatre while serving his sentence. He argues that theatre work is important because it counteracts the demand for emotional control that prisons impose on prisoners, and it promotes self-expression (White, 1998). White (1998) also describes how theatre has given him the space in prison to evolve, because theatre provides him with

... a domain that enables questions of identity, character and self-expression, to be explored as part of an on going [sic] process. To give voice to emotions and attempt meaningful expression to psychological states denied expression elsewhere. I have been permitted to probe and delve, not only into my own personal character and make-up, but also into the lives, other situations and viewpoints that lie beyond immediate experience. (184)

White (1998) expresses a great deal of gratitude for being able to practice theatre work with other prisoners. He describes theatre as giving him the tools to reintegrate confident and optimistic once his sentence is served (White, 1998). White (1998)

emphasizes how, in his experience, theatre aids prisoners in conducting identity work, provides them with a safe space to explore emotions, and allows for those involved to build a sense of self worth. In the next section of this literature review, programs similar to the one that White participated in while in prison are evaluated to better understand their effects.

**Relevant program evaluations.** Another common way in which this topic is discussed is through evaluations of specific programs or institutions which participate in arts practices for criminalized populations. These studies predominantly emerge and are readily available from programs in the UK and the USA, and the programs evaluated take place both inside and outside of prison walls. The UK reports often evaluate arts-based companies or programs within these companies. The following are prominent UK reports which have a theatre focus specifically: there are evaluations and reports of drama programs for women who are at risk or are in conflict with the law (Policy and Practice Research Group, 2008; van Maanen, 2010; Day, 2013); and reports also exist of programs which include criminalized youth (Centre for Applied Theatre Research, 2003; Goddard, 2006).

In one UK report, Day (2013) studies the experiences of female prisoners who participate in the 'Journey Woman' project by the Geese Theatre Company. Through the participants' daily diaries, Day (2013) conducts a qualitative analysis of the day to day drama activities in this week long project. The emergent themes from these diaries are: "goal setting, problem solving, coping strategies, avoiding re-offending and developing self-esteem" (Day, 2013: 8). The women participants emphasize their enjoyment of being supplied with a learning environment which is supportive, open,

and relaxed (Day, 2013). From participation in this drama-based program, many participants also describe a newfound motivation to change aspects of themselves (Day, 2013). Through drama exercises, participants also feel that the daily activities are relatable and relevant to their own personal experiences (Day, 2013). The Geese Theatre Project potentially aids female prisoners in developing relationships and building a motivation to change (Day, 2013).

In the USA, reports exist for arts programs which incorporate aspects of theatre. Arts-based programs for at risk or incarcerated youth are evaluated (Ezell & Levy, 2003; Palidofsky & Stolbach, 2012; Maschi, Miller, Rowe, & Morgen, 2013), as well as for adult criminalized populations (Hart, 1983; Halperin, Kessler, & Braunschweiger, 2012). Overall, the general consensus among these reports is that positive results exist for the participants involved in arts-based programs, except for Maschi et al. (2013), which found a modest difference in youth before and after participating in a short-term arts program.

Ezell and Levy (2003) conduct a three year evaluation in the USA of a voluntary arts program for imprisoned youth. The program is entitled 'A Changed World', and it is composed of short-term workshops covering a vast array of arts practices (Ezell & Levy, 2003). The goal of this program is to have imprisoned youth participate in arts-based activities to reduce recidivism (Ezell & Levy, 2003). These arts workshops have "academic, vocational, and behavioural goals," all of which are "accomplished to a very high degree" (Ezell & Levy, 2003: 108). Participation led to stronger compliance with behavioural expectations while in prison, and recidivism rates were found to be low in participants of the program (Ezell & Levy, 2003). This evaluation also acknowledges

how participating in different forms of arts workshops result in different overall experiences (Ezell & Levy, 2013). For example, theatre offers growth through “team building and the development of interpersonal and problem solving skills” (Ezell & Levy, 2013: 113), while painting may help a participant to gain more introspective skills. A lot is still left unknown about longer-term arts programs, but, overall, positive results have emerged from this particular evaluation for imprisoned youth (Ezell & Levy, 2013).

At this point, the discussion shifts focus to address the other part of the problem for this thesis. I have explored arts initiatives worldwide, and will now be looking at the other half of this historical discussion. The next section of this literature review addresses pertinent aspects on the topic of criminalized women in Canada.

**Women in prison in Canada.** As evidenced by the knowledge built so far around the literature related to this research project, prominent research about the role of theatre in the lives of criminalized women in Canadian is virtually nonexistent. As stated in the introduction chapter, the fastest growing population in prisons worldwide are women (Hotton Mahony, 2011; Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, 2006; Balfour, 2006a), and this is an important impetus for researching into alternative, arts-based practices for criminalized women in Canada.

Historically, criminalized women in Canada have been exposed to exceptionally harsh prison conditions (Hannah-Moffat, 2001), and have been socially constructed as “threatening, deceptive, avaricious, and dangerously susceptible to corruption” (Hannah-Moffat, 2001: 27). When depicting criminalized woman in Canada, Comack (2006b) problematizes how the media sensationalizes cases to be akin to that of serial

killer Karla Homolka. Offences committed by criminalized women are often poverty related offences “that reflect the systemic inequality, discrimination, and marginalization emanating from their class/race/gender locations” (Comack, 2006b: 72). Throughout time, criminalized women have been seen as serving a double sentence by not only breaking the law, but also breaking expected gender norms (Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

From her own extensive research, Kelly Hannah-Moffat (2001) thoroughly explores and problematizes the history of imprisonment for women in Canada. Historically in Canada, female prisoners have been neglected and have been required to participate in programs created for men (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Only by the early 1980s had the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) initiated research on imprisoned women so that they may design programs that fit their specific needs (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Until this point in time, the Prison for Women in Kingston spent nearly half a century imposing rehabilitative programming for women prisoners that “reinforced conventional gender stereotypes” (Hannah-Moffat, 2001: 87). These imposed, gendered stereotypes for women prisoners included values such as “heterosexuality, monogamy, and femininity” (Hannah-Moffat, 2001: 102). Only starting to consider the needs of women in the last few decades, Hannah-Moffat (2001) argues that “the Canadian state has put considerably less effort and fewer resources into researching the needs of incarcerated women than it has into the needs of incarcerated men” (21).

In 1990, the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women (TFFSW) created a report entitled *Creating Choices*. With a focus upon the experiences of women in Canada, this report argues that issues such as “poverty, racism, wife battering and

sexual abuse are centrally linked to women's crime" (TFFSW, 1990: Ch. VII). *Creating Choices* recommends change by taking action through five guiding principles: empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect and dignity, supportive environment, and shared responsibility (TFFSW, 1990). However, Hannah-Moffat (2001) critiques how such principals were recommended, yet they are not achieved for criminalized women in Canada.

For example, even having CSC engaging and applying the first principle of empowerment is currently what Hannah-Moffat (2001) entitles a 'lofty ideal'. The report is concerned with the empowerment of criminalized women because they lack both self-esteem and a belief in having the power to direct their own lives (TFFSW: 1990). Hannah-Moffat (2001) describes how empowerment is virtually impossible to obtain in the current prison system because factors such as making choices and controlling surroundings cannot exist for prisoners. Women prisoners are unable to affect the condition of their own lives, and prisons work "to limit individual expressions of autonomy, control, and choice" (Hannah-Moffat, 2001: 170). In the following quote, Hannah-Moffat (2001) problematizes how the CSC has altered the notion of empowerment to fit their own mandate: "Ironically, it can be argued that women are now being sent to prison, and being kept longer in prison with the goal of empowering them" (175). Rather than providing women with the tools to feel empowered, the CSC is repressing criminalized women by giving them longer sentences.

When obligated to provide equal programs to women prisoners as men, the CSC has also been found to offer women the same programs, and therefore "assumes that the programming needs of male and female offenders are the male" (Hannah-Moffat,

2001: 137). Hannah-Moffat (2001) describes how current CSC practices for women are problematic because women are more likely to be a risk to themselves rather than to others. Also, the chances to self injury, which is common for criminalized women in Canada, likely increases in such punitive environments (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Women in prison in Canada present a range of needs, and the current direction of the CSC toward a dependency on punitive and restrictive interventions is problematic for this prison population (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Challenges for women prisoners in Canada are even more evident in the following section, which explores Kendall's (1993) program evaluation on this topic.

**Program evaluation of the CSC for women prisoners.** In 1993, Kendall conducted a program evaluation for the Correctional Service of Canada regarding therapeutic services for imprisoned women. Her evaluation includes interviews, observations, and document analysis (Kendall, 1993). One of the findings is that women prisoners believe it is therapeutic to have a wider range of activities available, including programs with creative outlets, such as drama (Kendall, 1993). Therapeutic programs, such as arts programs, are described by participants as important because they can provide "women with a space to 'just be themselves,' be in control of their own lives, and/or an opportunity to value and be valued by another" (Kendall, 1993: R. 4.6). Ninety-three percent of participants in this study voiced their desire to have more groups made available to them, and drama workshops in particular were listed as potentially being very helpful (Kendall, 1993). Kendall (1993) also found that only about seven percent of this prison population participate in therapeutic groups outside of prison walls. Overall, it was found that Canada's women prisoners identify

themselves as being unprepared for eventual release with the structure of the current system (Kendall, 1993). Since this program evaluation in 1993, important changes to the CSC for women prisoners have occurred. In this next section, a more recent history of women prisoners in Canada is explored.

**Recent history for women prisoners in Canada.** One year after Kendall's (1993) study was published, the place where this evaluation took place, the Prison For Women in Kingston, Ontario, had an event occur that has since gained national attention. Following a planned escape by six prisoners, and physical violence between guards and prisoners, an Institutional Emergency Response Team consisting of all males entered the solitary confinement unit (Arbour, 1996). Women were physically removed from their cells, had body cavity searches, and some were placed back in segregation for months with "no hygiene products, no daily exercise, no writing materials, and no contact with family" (Comack, 2006a: 49). What occurred was a brutal intervention that "raises the question of whether the treatment of the inmates was cruel, inhumane, and degrading" (Arbour, 1996: 2.4.2.8a).

In the resulting inquiry, Arbour (1996) describes Canada's female prison population as presenting minimal risk, as well as having both high and different needs from male prisoners. Arbour (1996) also argues that we need to "develop and experiment on progressive correctional techniques" for women, and she problematizes the fact that "if a progressive measure fails in the men's population, it will likely never be made available to women, even if its chances of success were much greater in the women's population" (4.4.1). In her report of this event, Arbour (1996) concludes that the treatment of the female prisoners involved was unacceptable, and since this event

the Kingston Prison for Women has closed down. This publicly exposed altercation and resulting inquiry created a much needed direct lens into the experiences of criminalized women in Canada. However, five years after the Arbour report was published, Hannah-Moffat (2001) argues that few “recommendations have been implemented in the spirit in which they were intended” (198).

Women prisoners in Canada are considered to possess a high potential of reintegration, are considered motivated to be responsible and active in their own supervision, and are receptive to the opportunities provided to them through the Correction Service of Canada (Fortin, 2004). Between 50% and 60% of women in conflict with the law federally are in the community on conditional release (Fortin, 2004). The CSC offers an array of programs currently for women prisoners, and these programs are offered both in the prisons as well as within the community (CSC: *Correctional Process*, 2014). Fortin (2004) describes how criminalized women face a wide array of personal challenges, such as:

... low self-esteem, dependency, poor educational and vocational achievement, parental death at an early age, foster care placement, constant changes in the location of foster care, residential placement, living on the streets, participation in the sex trade, suicide attempts, self-injury, and substance abuse. (5)

To aid women in being ‘law-abiding citizens’ once more, CSC programs for women prisoners focus on the following four areas: *correctional, educational, social, and vocational* (CSC: *Correctional Process*, 2014). Investigating into the current structure and state of programs offered to women prisoners through the CSC informs us about how this population is engaged with when in conflict with the law. The following

section describes the how the four areas of programming for women prisoners are framed through the CSC's website.

**Current CSC programs for women prisoners.** The CSC describes the correctional programs as working with women prisoners to understand the impact of their actions, and avoid reoffending after release (CSC: *Offender Rehabilitation: CP*, 2014). They vary in intensity based assessed on risk, and there are also modified versions of these programs for Aboriginal, female prisoners (CSC: *Offender Rehabilitation: CP*, 2014). The education programs teach prisoners “basic literacy, academic and personal development skills” (CSC: *Offender Rehabilitation: EP*, 2014). One example of an educational program that exists specifically for women prisoners is the ‘Keys to Family Literacy Program,’ which teaches them how to link literacy and parenting (CSC: *Education Programs*, 2014). The CSC describes social programs as providing prisoners with the opportunity for both personal, as well as social growth through recreational and leisure activities (CSC: *Offender Rehabilitation: SP*, 2014). Lastly, vocational programs offer certain prisoners job training in a potential variety of work areas (CSC: *Offender Rehabilitation: VP*, 2014).

It is within the subsection of ‘leisure activities’ that arts initiatives are outlined as an activity for prisoners through the CSC. The CSC explains how, as long as “the security of the penitentiary or the safety of persons” (CSC: *Commissioner’s Directive*, 2014) is ensured, each prison can ‘encourage’ prisoners to participate in leisure programs. One of these activities or programs includes prisoners being able to “pursue various hobbies and develop knowledge, creativity and skills related to arts and crafts” (CSC: *Commissioner’s Directive*, 2014). This is the extent to which CSC currently

incorporates arts initiatives for women prisoners in Canada. The CSC describes itself as being “guided by the most recent evidence in correctional research, relevant theory and current practices” (CSC: *Correctional Process*, 2014). However, to create change and effectively aid criminalized women, we need to strive to implement initiatives that function completely outside of the CSC. The excessive amount of restrictions faced by criminalized women through the CSC needs to be countered and challenged, and introducing an arts program into this currently broken system is not an acceptable solution. In turn, the second dominant part of this literature review discusses ways in which my own research builds on the literature discussed in the first part of this chapter.

#### **Fitting within the Literature & Potential Contributions:**

It is not uncommon in the current literature for both researchers and practitioners to problematize how underdeveloped research and programming opportunities for arts-based initiatives are. For example, in *Unlocking Value* (Johnson et al., 2011), it was found that much more research and record keeping needs to be done for arts-based initiatives and, as a result, this sector is not even developed enough to compare programs once results are obtained (Johnson et al., 2011). By conducting rigorous research on theatre initiatives for criminalized women, I can contribute to the growing knowledge base within this field. Even from within prison walls, White (1999) describes his impetus for writing about theatre initiatives as being an attempt to counter the erosion of theatre practices within prisons.

Mullen (1999), a firsthand arts practitioner in the US, also describes how rehabilitation programs for women in prison are largely underdeveloped. In turn, she

argues that 'expressive workshops' (or arts-based practices) in women's prisons are therefore commonly met "with resistance and provoke controversy" (Mullen, 1999: 144). By conducting research to better understand the role of theatre in the lives of criminalized women, perhaps these initiatives can become more accepted, and even potentially considered for criminalized women in Canada. The public perception of what theatre programming for criminalized women means, as well as the effects of theatre in the lives of these women are important aspects of my research.

Through this research project, several contributions can be made. First, because theatre initiatives for criminalized populations are largely an unexplored topic, this project will fill some holes in the current literature. I will provide a detailed, qualitative case study from a researcher's perspective, unlike much of the current literature which is written by prison theatre practitioners (for example, as stated earlier: Thompson, 1998; Trounstone, 2001; Shailor, 2011). This research project is also important in terms of initiating a discussion around theatre practices for criminalized women in Canada. Current literature on this topic in Canada is virtually nonexistent, and this thesis can be a springboard for exploring theatre practices with a Canadian context.

Also, by practicing ethics of caring and accountability, I will be engaged as a researcher in a more interactive fashion with the research participants I am working with (Mander, 2010). Regarding the experiences of criminalized women, this research process can "transform ignorance and misapprehensions ... into more informed consciousness" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 26). I believe that "research should provide voice to those who are silenced or marginalised" (Ezzy, 2002: 56). White (1998) describes how theatre offers voice in "communities where the human condition is

suppressed” (184). With a lack of research currently on this topic for criminalized women in Canada, the role of voice is an important theme for this project. Balfour (2006a) explains how females in Canada are regulated through “deeply gendered, racialized, sexualized, and class-based interventions” (154). This regulation of the female sex conceives criminalized women as ‘failed citizens’ (Balfour, 2006a).

In her own research on the topic, McAvinchey (2011) argues that “there is an urgent political, economic, social and cultural need for a critical re-engagement with the *idea* of prison and that theatre ... [it] provides us with unique opportunities for this re-engagement” (7, emphasis in original). By bringing criminalized women center stage through theatre initiatives, potential also exists to challenge our overly saturated, numbed conceptions of prison life (McAvinchey, 2011). Through my research project, I will be working to give voice to the marginalised population of criminalized women. I will become “the eye of the text – the facilitator of the display of voices, including [my] own, and the illuminator of the text through reflexive/reflective/refractive critique” (Grbich, 2004: 68). By looking to give voice to the participants involved in my research, I am looking to challenge their own oppression by offering them the ability to openly speak and reflect on their own experiences. This project can both aid the criminalized women currently involved in theatre practices (such as the women at Clean Break), as well as criminalized women who may also in the future be given an opportunity to explore theatre initiatives because of the expanding knowledge base on this topic from research such as this.

This project is also imperative because it explores and analyses the data from a feminist and cultural theoretical framework. As evidenced from the previously existing

literature on the topic, theory is rarely used to enhance and further develop a deeper engagement with the data. The theory being applied will allow for a more dynamic understanding of the experiences of criminalized women through a broader cultural lens. This thesis will be applying both classic and newer theories to the case study to obtain a more coherent and contextualized understanding of the role of theatre in the lives of the criminalized women involved in this project. A larger discussion will be invited to occur through the application of newer interdisciplinary theories, such as Frigon's (2014) performative criminology. By doing this, I am hoping to elevate the standards of research on theatre initiatives for criminalized populations, and start a larger conversation on the relevance of theatre practices.



*One of Clean Break's studio spaces.*

## Chapter 3: Theory

### Introduction

The following chapter explains and examines the theoretical inspirations from which the data analysis will be framed. In order to understand and explore the ways in which criminalized women can engage with theatre, I will be incorporating related theory to better conceptualize their experiences. Within this project I will be merging some older theory, such as that developed by Erving Goffman, with more contemporary and developing theories, such as the work of Judith Butler. The following sections will be interwoven to create a comprehensive and exploratory analysis of the data gathered.

The first part of this chapter delves into aspects of sociologists Erving Goffman and Robert Ezra Park's ideas and theories. Goffman analyzes human behaviour through one's own presentation of self and he views social interactions as theatrical performances for targeted audiences. He also draws on Park's work around masks and the individual self, which will also be discussed.

The second section of this chapter explores poststructuralism and, in turn, engages with some of Judith Butler's dominant theories and ideas. Butler approaches her work from a feminist framework, and she grapples with concepts such as gender and performativity. In this section, I will describe how these theoretical influences consider our subjectivity to be historically and culturally cultivated.

Lastly, the third segment discusses the role of cultural criminology, as well as Frigon's "performative criminology". To delve into cultural criminology I will be drawing from theorists Jeff Ferrell, Keith Hayward, and Jock Young. This part looks at how cultural criminology is innately critical and political as it looks at the role of human

expression in relation to criminology. Frigon's theory around performative criminology also keeps this field germane culturally. She investigates how the arts, primarily dance, can be used as a tool to further investigate and expand upon current conceptualizations of criminology. It is through all of these concepts and theorists that my analysis will be structured.

### **Goffman & Park – Presentation of Self and Masks**

*“Life may not be much of a gamble, but interaction is.”* (Goffman, 1959: 243)

Erving Goffman is a sociologist whose work is approached from a symbolic interactionist framework. Within the analysis section of this thesis, Goffman's theory around social interaction from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) will be applied. When citing Goffman directly in this section it is important to acknowledge that this theorist explains experiences of the individual with masculine pronouns throughout (such as 'him,' 'he,' and 'his'). The use of these masculine pronouns are intended to be universal for all individuals of any gender, and differ from the intrinsically feminist lens that shapes this thesis otherwise.

Introducing Goffman's work, Branaman (1997) describes how this theorist depicts the self as a social product. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) depicts social interaction as a performance that individuals 'put on' for a target audience. In the following quote, Goffman (1959) defines performance as: “the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (22). It is the audience's job to interpret the performance (or social interaction) that is

taking place in front of them (Goffman, 1959). Performances validated by audiences create a sense of self within the performers (Branaman, 1997).

The individual performing to an audience is divided into two parts. The individual is both a performer, who constructs impressions in a performance, and a character, who possesses “sterling qualities the performance was designed to evoke” (Goffman, 1959: 252). Individuals also interact with others through two types of signs (Goffman, 1959). There is both the traditional means of communication, through verbal symbols, and communicating through a range of actions (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) simplifies these two signs as: “the expression that he *gives*, and the expression that he *gives off*” (2, emphasis in original).

Goffman (1959) describes how, when before others, an individual can possess multiple motives regarding obtaining a specific impression from them. He theorizes different techniques that an individual may employ to sustain sought after impressions (Goffman, 1959). This performance can be very calculated, attempting to give a particular impression and elicit a particular response from audience members (Goffman, 1959). However, performances most commonly occur in relation to their social standing in a particular group and social status more widely, which requires such a form of expression (Goffman, 1959).

To effectively perform in front of an audience, the individual possess’ an arsenal of ‘expressive equipment’ (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) considers this to be the actors’ *front*, and it helps to define the situation during a performance. The front region is where the performance is presented (Goffman, 1959). The front contains standard parts such as the setting, or scenic aspects, and the personal front, which can be

dynamic or static (Goffman, 1959). Audiences expect the appearance, manner, and setting of a particular performer to all match up as well (Goffman, 1959). In turn, a back region (or back stage) also exists, and it is there that suppressed facts reside and no audience members can invade (Goffman, 1959). It is within the back region that the performance is prepared (Goffman, 1959). For the data analysis, I will further explore these aspects of character (or individual) fronts for the women studying at Clean Break.

In relation to the pertinent community involved, a performance generally illuminates the norms of the area (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) borrows from Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown when he parallels a performance as a ceremony in that it is “an expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of the community” (35). Goffman’s (1959) logic then follows that it is common for a performance to involve striving for a higher social status. However, females have been found to underplay “expressions of wealth, capacity, spiritual strength, or self-respect” (Goffman, 1959: 38). This allows for male dominance to remain the cultural norm, as well as affirming the substandard role of women (Goffman, 1959). Goffman’s recognition of a gendered power imbalance as the norm can be linked to the gendered environment offered to criminalized women at Clean Break.

This nod to overarching gender imbalances can be further connected to Goffman’s explanations of the performer. The performer continuously works to conceal aspects of him or herself which are in contention with what is considered the ideal version of oneself (Goffman, 1959). Therefore, a woman who does not ‘abide’ by gender stereotypes may work to downplay her cultural deviancy to audiences. Performances commonly depict to audiences “an idealized view of the situation”

(Goffman, 1959: 35). Lemert (1997) describes Goffman's perspective on social interaction when he states: "Appearances count for more than do truth, beauty, freedom, the good self, and all the other foundational virtues of modern life" (xxxiii).

Goffman (1959) also describes an important aspect of the performer-audience dynamic. Through audience segregation the performer is able to play different roles in different settings (Goffman, 1959). This segregation aids the performer in fully committing to a particular role at any given time, but it also can create certain challenges as well (Goffman, 1959). The practice of audience segregation is such a norm that, even if the performer tries to break free from it, audiences will resist and prevent such a change from happening (Goffman, 1959). By maintaining segregated performances, audiences are able to save their own "time and emotional energy in the right to treat the performer at occupational face value, as if the performer were all and only what his uniform claimed him to be" (Goffman, 1959: 49). Goffman's descriptions of audiences, settings, and the pigeonholing of individuals will be explored in further depth in relation to theatre work for criminalized women as well.

The challenges to social performances are many, and require a great deal of work for an effective show to take place. Goffman (1959) describes how flimsy the constructed impression of reality, which results from a performance, is and that this reality can easily be fractured. As characters in a performance, humans are not able to have emotional variables or different impulses in front of an audience or else the effectiveness of their performance may be threatened (Goffman, 1959). Performing in front of an audience can also be somewhat of a balancing act because it is challenging to always fully fit all of the varieties of characters that we present at any given time

(Goffman, 1959). It is through experiences of pride and shame that individuals are motivated as performers to succeed in whatever impression they are working to leave with audiences (Branaman, 1997).

The management of impressions requires the involvement of both the performer and of the audience. Individuals do not have the liberty to simply decide how they will be conveyed in a performance (Branaman, 1997). Personal identity is largely shaped by how others have experienced the performer, rather than by the performer personally (Branaman, 1997). Goffman (1959) proposes that it is through social discipline that a performer can maintain, from the inside out, the intended performance. This internalized social discipline can lead to a performer being drawn in by their own performance to the extent that they will believe that the reality they are presenting is the actual, complete reality (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) describes this process as self-distantiation, whereby an individual comes to feel alienated from him or herself. Even in private the individual may continue to “maintain standards of behavior which he does not personally believe in, maintaining these standards because of a lively belief that an unseen audience is present who will punish deviations from these standards” (Goffman, 1959: 81).

Concealing aspects of a performance, or misrepresenting oneself to some extent, is a common practice for performers (Goffman, 1959). Concealment, even if minor, can affect the entire performance because of the anxiety that could plague a performer for being caught (Goffman, 1959). For example, a criminalized woman may bring anxiety to a job interview because she may be attempting to conceal aspects of herself, and this could negatively affect her ability to represent herself as a desirable candidate. To

counteract this anxiety, individuals need to “learn enough pieces of expression to be able to ‘fill in’ and manage, more or less, any part that he is likely to be given” (Goffman, 1959: 73). The performer learns through social interactions with others how to regulate their voice, face, and body (Goffman, 1959). Managing oneself in front of others is not a skill which can be verbally taught, but it needs to be internally learned (Goffman, 1959). Therefore, the criminalized woman may combat anxiety at a job interview by having learned pieces of expression such as appropriate amounts of eye contact, pacing breathing, or physically holding themselves with more confidence. Audience members will value and treat performers according to the social characteristics the individual possess’ (Goffman, 1959). Maintaining a respectable self-image to audiences is dependent upon the individual’s “access to structural resources and possession of traits and attributes deemed desirable by the dominant culture” (Branaman, 1997: xlvi). I am curious as to whether theatre can be a resource through which a criminalized individual can effectively explore and manage how they represent themselves.

With all of the factors that join together to culminate in social interaction, the individual is formed. Goffman (1959) argues that the self is the product of all of these parts which come together to form social interactions. According to Lemert (1997), Goffman’s work is based off of the desire to understand how social reality is able to sustain itself. This theorist is not interested in how literal aspects of theatre may exist in everyday life, but rather it is through theatre that Goffman (1959) explores how daily social encounters are structured. This is a vast system which requires the involvement of performers, audience members, and even outsiders to apply learned techniques to

ensure that a performance goes off without a hitch (Goffman, 1959). For Goffman (in Lemert, 1997), reality is constructed through “definite, precise, and surprisingly universal social mechanisms” (xxxvii).

Goffman (1959) cites Park’s theory in relation to interactions and masks to further illustrate his own work. Park (1950) theorizes that when two individuals meet for the first time factors, such as race, become their identity rather than their social characteristics. Even before verbal communication, physical and visibly observable traits can immediately shape how a person is perceived. Differences of dress, manner, behaviour, or even facial expressions can all contribute to how an individual is judged by others (Park, 1950). Park (1950) argues that such identifying factors, for him most importantly race, naturally bring forth prejudice depending on the audience involved.

Park (1950) describes how the mask represents the role we strive to fulfill, and states that:

It is probably no mere historical accident that the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role. [...] It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves. (249)

The mask becomes how we conceive ourselves to be as we work to be a very specific ‘type’ of person (Park, 1950). Park (1950) describes this mask to be our truer selves because it is the version of ourselves that we are always working to be. In turn, an individual’s personality is, in part, shaped by the mask they wear day to day (Park, 1950). It is through our masks that we “achieve character, and become persons” (Park, 1950: 250).

Park (1950) also discusses how sudden changes occur when an individual obtains a new conception of self. The mood that goes along with this new conception of self can be contagious to some extent if it is shared by a group of people that share some trait (Park, 1950). Park (1950) acknowledges an important cultural link when he states that: “the mood of individuals is reenforced [sic] and sustained by the contagious influence of other individuals, manners and customs, art and literature, all the natural forms of expression reflect the change in attitude and orientation” (252). Park’s (1950) reference can be linked to the sudden shift in a conception of self faced by individuals who find themselves criminalized. Park (1950) is making a link here to identity work, as well as some features that are taken up in cultural criminology as well.

### **Butler & Poststructuralism**

*Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief.*

(Butler, 1990: 141)

For my analysis, I will be drawing from Butler’s poststructuralist theories around gender, identity, and performativity. Butler also undeniably problematizes heteronormative standards and contributes to queer theory significantly. However, for this particular research project, sexuality is not a focus for the participants involved, and so this aspect of Butler’s work is out of the scope of this research project.

In *Undoing Gender*, Butler (2004) articulates an ongoing, gender themed debate around “the permanent difficulty of determining where the biological, the psychic, the discursive, the social begin and end” (185). Discussing feminist poststructuralist

theory, Weedon (1987) explains how our subjectivity is not biologically innate, but socially constructed. In some of her earlier work, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler (1990) grapples with this debate. She describes how gender can be constructed through culture, rather than simply through biology (Butler, 1990).

Feminist poststructuralist theory views our subjectivity as a result of our culture, and so the historical production of subjectivities is an important point of inquiry (Weedon, 1987). Throughout *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) conducts a genealogical critique which explores the political motives behind culturally constructed identity categories. These identity categories are therefore “the *effects* of institutions, practices, [and] discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin” (Butler, 1990: ix, emphasis in original). It is through these external infrastructures that identity exists, rather than identity pre-existing or being constructed ‘naturally’ in an individual. Individuals take on social meanings of institutions and are shaped by them (Weedon, 1987). How they are shaped can either result in the individual serving “hegemonic interests or [challenging] existing power relations” (Weedon, 1987: 25).

Gender is a broader, more culturally-based construct, which surpasses the basic physical, or biological, features of an individual. It is through seemingly unavoidable cultural laws that gender appears fixed (Butler, 1990). Butler (1990) also considers bodies to be *instruments* that cannot have “a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender” (8). An interrogation occurs about how identity is created through the binaries of ‘sex, gender, and the body,’ which results in “productions that create the effect of the natural, the original, and the inevitable” (Butler, 1990: viii). Categories of

identity are, in turn, fictitious constructs that are produced by power regimes (Jagger, 2008).

Once a body is culturally marked by gender, becoming said gender is an ongoing process. Butler (1990) expands on Beauvoir's work when she explores how a body is not just simply biologically a woman; becoming a woman is a process without a beginning or ending (Butler, 1990). Butler (1990) describes how gender is implanted on a body when she states that: "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33). Theatre work with criminalized women can potentially link to these concepts as women learn to holistically reconnect to their own selves through such arts-based practices. How a woman's gender has been framed and congealed may be individually conceptualized through a program such as Clean Break.

Intersectional research allows us to analyze experiences as not just being on a single axis of discrimination or oppression, but on multiple axes, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class (Collins, 2000). Regardless of these various intersections, "...structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression" (Collins, 2000: 18). Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) forms pivotal theory regarding intersectionality in relation to the experiences of Black women. Crenshaw (1989) problematizes how white men represent the norm, and this is especially problematic for Black women, who must experience multiple layers of discrimination as a result.

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) describes intersectionality as referencing forms of intersecting oppressions, such as race and gender. Our system is too simplified by functioning on a 'single-axis framework,' so "Black women are theoretically erased" (Crenshaw, 1989: 139). Crenshaw (1989) explains how Black women often experience 'double-discrimination,' which occurs when the effects of racial and sexual discrimination are compounded. However, intersectional research is important because "...sometimes, they experience discrimination as Black women – not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women" (Crenshaw, 1989: 149). Intersectional oppression is especially evident within Canada's prison population. In Canada, Aboriginal people make up less than 3% of the population, yet Aboriginal women represent 32% of federally sentenced women (Sapers, 2008). Aboriginal women in Canada must face intersecting oppressions and discrimination through factors such as their race, gender, class, and sexuality.

In conjunction with the works of Young and Kristeva, Butler (1990) also explores the process of becoming the 'Other'. Bodies are rejected when they are not considered to be part of the culturally 'dominant' group, such being outside the hegemonic sex, race, or sexuality (Butler, 1990). Once rejected, these bodies, or 'Others', experience repulsion, exclusion, and domination (Young in Butler, 1990). In Butler's (1990) candid words, through such rejection identities are formed and the "Others become shit" (134). The body is a politically regulated surface through which a gender hierarchy is entrenched (Butler, 1990). Situated in a phallogocentric western culture, Butler (1990) argues that "women represent the sex that cannot be thought, a linguistic absence and opacity" (9). Feminist research interrogates discourses that are

critical of women's bodies, and which are typically viewed as inadequate in relation to men (Frigon & Shantz, 2014). Theatre as a potential lens into the lives of criminalized women may also aid us in better understanding the experiences of women who, in many ways, have been made 'Others'. This aspect of Butler's work can potentially link to excluded and dominated populations, such as criminalized women.

Within this discussion of gender exists many aspects of Butler's (1990) theory of performativity. Performativity is a holistic process which encompasses both speech acts, as well as bodily acts (Butler, 2004). The acts and gestures that produce an individual's identity are considered performative in that the identities presented are themselves manufactured and maintained (Butler, 1990). Butler (2011) describes how a difference exists between stating that gender is performed and that gender is performative. Gender performativity entails more than simply 'acting' a certain way; individuals will represent themselves in a particular way physically and verbally to unify their understandings of gender binaries (Butler, 2011).

Butler (1990) describes gender performativity as a 'strategy' because "gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end" (139). Performativity is important because, when an individual fails to perform their gender properly, the results can be punitive (Butler, 1999). These punitive forces can range from informal practices, such as bullying, to more formal practices, such as psychiatric responses (Butler, 2011). Therefore, gender is a construction that is maintained through its appearance of credibility and the threat of punishment to those who disagree with such a construction (Butler, 1999). By having gender culturally formulated in such a manner, we are compelled to believe "in its necessity and naturalness" (Butler, 1999: 140). It is often

argued that criminalized women are women who have potentially 'done' gender wrong (Worrall, 1990), and theatre can be a lens through which we may better understand the experiences of those who have 'failed' or resisted.

When discussing aspects of poststructural theory, Weedon (1987) focus' on the role of subjectivity, which refers to: "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (Weedon, 1987: 32). Poststructuralist theory views subjectivity as a continual process that is "constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (Weedon, 1987: 33). A prominent aspect of Butler's (1999) gender performativity is that it is formed through repetition. Performativity is not a single act, but is repeated over time to reiterate norms (Butler, 1993). Through repetition, socially established meanings are once again acted out and experienced each time, which results in further legitimating them (Butler, 1999). The resulting performance preserves gender as a binary construct (Butler, 1999). The performance of gender is never stagnant, but is something which is temporal (Butler, 1990). Butler (1990) argues that certain gender performances reinforce the norms of the time (Brady & Schirato, 2011; Butler, 1993).

Applying a poststructuralist framework, Butler is able to grapple with power mechanisms and examine how change may be possible (Weedon, 1987). In her analyses, Butler (1990) also explores how resistance may occur within such restraints. However, resistance is not something which can occur outside of these cultural and power embedded constructs. To attempt resistance, individuals must work within the system and re-evaluate the "possibilities for sexuality and identity within the terms of

power itself' (Butler, 1990: 30). These binaries that construct identity are certainly embedded, but also possess aspects of instability (Jagger, 2008). Analyzing Butler's work, Jagger (2008) argues that this instability creates the ability to pursue change. Butler (2011) also emphasizes the need to "resist the violence that is imposed by ideal gender norms," especially for those who do not conform to the socially constructed expectations of gender. Worrall (1990) explains how criminalized women are viewed as deviants of the 'gender contract,' in which women are expected to fulfill unspoken regulations regarding expectations of femininity. I am interested in seeing how theatre can potentially offer a new dimension through which resistance can be explored for criminalized women.

Although Goffman and Butler pursue their theories from very different paradigms, these two theorists complement each other well. Goffman is more heavily rooted in a realist ontology where reality exists and personal identity is shaped by the audience and the performer. Butler's poststructuralist approach is much more macro and dynamic in that she looks at identity in relation to institutions, external infrastructures, and discourses. Goffman's theory made initial proposals about the intricacies of interactions and the shaping of individual identities, and Butler brought these nuggets into a poststructuralist context and expanded on them in her own right. Approaching my research for a feminist framework and relativist ontology, my data analysis will draw heavily from Butler. However, Goffman provides important building blocks in this discussion of identity and interaction which will absolutely be incorporated as well.

## **Cultural & Performative Criminology**

Another theoretical inspiration through which the data analysis will be explored is that of cultural criminology. To participate in a cultural, critical criminology it is necessary to surpass limited views of criminalized harms and begin to include “symbolic displays of transgression and control, feelings and emotions that emerged within criminal events” (Ferrell, Hayward, & Young, 2008: 2). We also must incorporate how the public and political realm shape what crime is and the ramifications of committing those acts deemed criminal (Ferrell et al., 2008). Landry (2013) argues that culture is acted and produced for an audience to experience, and that culture, in turn, can be described thoroughly. This approach to criminology allows any analysis to be more contemporary and better holistically situated in the context of the experiences being explored.

Cultural criminology is innately critical as it interrogates existing conceptualizations of the politics around crime control (Ferrell et al., 2008). Through cultural criminology, crime is also understood as being a form of human expression (Ferrell et al., 2008). Approaching my analysis from this theoretical framework allows me to better explore how theatre can potentially be used as a unique lens through which criminalized women can be better understood. Conventional criminology has focused too much on the background factors which lead to a crime being committed, rather than those moments when the “background factors explode into meaning and emotion” (Ferrell et al., 2008: 180). This study explores what topics and experiences criminalized women refer to when on stage. The stage allows for the opportunity to

create a visceral understanding for audiences regarding the moment a cultural transgression (or crime) occurs.

Ferrell et al. (2008) problematize the perspective that a criminology exists which is objective and devoid of moral and political standpoints. Within the penal system there are deep rooted inequalities, such as gender, race, class, and age (Ferrell et al., 2008). These inequalities maintain social control and political power, which feeds into a system that continues to cultivate these dynamics (Ferrell et al., 2008). It will be important in my own research to acknowledge how various inequalities contribute to criminalized women being disenfranchised. Conducting and exploring edgework, Landry (2013) describes how the political realm can be challenged “through the production of discursive counter statements” (4). This can entail performances through which cooperative action occurs (Landry, 2013), such as the voices of many criminalized women on stage bringing to light their own experiences.

Another important aspect of cultural criminology entails understanding how individuals are currently socially structured to maintain relevance in the field of criminology (Ferrell et al., 2008). Presently we are situated in a time of ontological insecurity, where both production and consumption are affected by social uncertainty (Ferrell et al., 2008). The level of risk in society is continually evaluated, and stress and uncertainty prevail (Ferrell et al., 2008). We demand of ourselves a strong sense of self-identity in a time where achieving such structure and certainty is contradictory (Ferrell et al., 2008). Ontological insecurity is thriving and it entails the ‘othering’ of individuals as a form of ‘identity politics’ (Ferrell et al., 2008). This cultural phenomenon ensures the continued ‘othering’ of certain individuals, such as those who

find themselves in conflict with the law. It is also important to recognize how we are situated in a time which is very concerned with identity and security. Identity work may be an aspect of theatre work for criminalized women as well.

Cultural criminology pays close attention to the “*lived experience* of crime, transgression, and social control” (Ferrell et al., 2008: 80, emphasis in original). Therefore, a goal of this form of criminology includes understanding how mediated processes frame or shape our experiences of certain topics (such as crime) through their cultural reproductions (Ferrell et al., 2008). Media outlets inundate us with a very rigid depiction of crime and deviance, and it is important to interrogate these increasingly blurred lines between what is reality and what is constructed (Ferrell et al., 2008). Exploring how criminalized women interact with theatre as a potential tool of expression could bring to light differences between reality and reproductions of experiences.

There is a mediated and fluid culture cultivated, which not only shapes meaning around crime, but also distorts the experiences of both crime and criminality individually (Ferrell et al., 2008). Therefore, these cultural reproductions not only affect understanding for audiences, but also invade the experiences of those involved. I am interested in exploring how theatre could potentially provide a way in which we could better understand how these cultural reproductions affect criminalized women.

In her own work on dance in prisons, Frigon (2014) proposes applying cultural criminology to dance performances for new understandings regarding experiences around imprisonment. The medium of dance allows for both the experiences and the effects of imprisonment to be developed in a new way (Frigon, 2014). Frigon’s (2014)

own dance project is theoretically innovative because the participants involved experience multiple levels of engagement. Once the study was completed, Frigon (2014) observes that participants gain new knowledge regarding “themselves, each other, and the carceral environment through the dance project” (30). Frigon (2014) argues that, through the medium of performance, criminology can be conceptualized differently. Theory and practice in criminology have become increasingly rethought through the body (Frigon & Shantz, 2014). Frigon and Shantz (2014) argue that the body can be used to explore “gendered bodily practices through dance” (85). Goffman and Butler also both consider the concept of the body in their own works, and the body will be an important concept to explore and observe in relation to criminalized women practicing theatre.

Frigon (2014) adapts and transforms cultural criminology into a new, “performative criminology”. Performing criminology allows for this discipline to remain culturally pertinent (Frigon, 2014). For Frigon (2014), studying dance can further develop criminology by “inserting women, mobilities, bodies and identities into the research frame” (31). This marriage of the artistic and carceral allows participants to challenge their conceptualizations of the penal system through interpretations of “movements, emotions and visceral reactions” (Frigon, 2014: 31). Frigon and Shantz (2014) describe how culture is put into motion through performances. Performances are unique in that they “open spaces for critical thought, challenging categories and structures by connecting actions and events” (Bell in Frigon & Shantz, 2014: 90). This performative criminology can be very useful in relation to theatre work for criminalized women as well. A special effort needs to be made to counter orthodox

research practices, because the current system often lends itself so well to such stagnant approaches (Landry, 2013). Applying cultural and performative criminologies to this project works to counter such orthodox practices.

Cheliotis (2012) has compiled a book which explores the role of arts-based practices for prisoners. In his discussion, Cheliotis (2012) argues that: “The arts ... constitute an alternative lens through which to understand state-sanctioned punishment and its place in public consciousness” (1). Prisons are designed in such a way that prisoners are made invisible to everyone outside of prisons walls (Fahy, 2012). Fahy (2012) argues that, by putting this invisible population on stage, they are made visible once more. The result of putting criminalized individuals on stage is twofold in that it “allows audiences to ‘see’ the humanity of these figures and in turn recognize some of the social injustices of incarceration” (Fahy, 2012: 89). By representing life on stage, theatre practices can allow for expression to emerge, even in the presence of immediate or personal constraints (Schiele, 2012). Actors and audience members can experience an intimate connection as a result of a performance, and this connection can be the moment that instigates a need for social change (Fahy, 2012).

As an art form, theatre has the ability to potentially promote public awareness over issues within the penal system (Walsh, 2012). It is through arts-based practices that we can see, comprehend, and interact with the world in an alternative way (Williams, 2012). The arts allow for both reflection and engagement to occur, which are both important factors for learning and transformation (Williams, 2012). Although I will be conducting a case study of a company which runs outside of prison walls, these concepts may be important for the data analysis. Theatre being used as a tool through

which women can be moved from an invisible, to visible population possesses relevance. Also, I am interested in assessing how theatre can offer an alternative lens through which these women's' experiences can be relayed to audiences, including myself.

In line with Frigon's (2014) work to link choreography with criminology, I too am exploring how theatrical propositions can translate into criminological propositions. Criminological propositions can be animated through theatre work, and the resulting experiences can influence how we 'do' criminology. Theatrical work allows for criminology as a field to be further developed directly by those we spend so much time researching and theorizing about. Doing theatre with criminalized women allows for a means through which identity work and the presentation of self in relation to their own experiences can occur. We can humanize and empower populations through various facets of theatre such as body work, breath, voice, and identity work. The stage gives new space to marginalized populations and it forces audiences to be viscerally connected to their experiences. By linking theatre with criminalized populations, we can make criminological propositions more practical and relevant.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The following chapter provides a detailed description of the research methodology for this thesis. I will begin by detailing my own positioning for this project, and will define terms and concepts used in this thesis. The research design will then be discussed, including key aspects such as study population, setting, sampling design, procedures, and tools. The following section will address methods of analysis, and techniques applied. I then will be discussing validity and reliability, and will finish with a section on ethical considerations for this thesis.

### **Positioning**

I have conducted my research from a constructivist, feminist paradigm. By working from a constructivist paradigm, my research aims to both build understanding, as well to reconstruct the existing constructions of all involved in this research project (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Advocacy and activism are important aspects of this paradigm as well, because there is a focus on allowing for a more informed and sophisticated understanding of constructions that exist (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This paradigm values the powerless or 'at-risk' populations by ensuring that equal consideration and voice is given to this group in the research process (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe constructivist paradigms as epistemologically being "transactional and subjectivist" (111). Innately my epistemological framework demands that myself and the individuals who participate in this research project are inextricably linked together throughout the research process, because 'findings' are created as the research process occurs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Both my own values,

and the ones brought forth by the participants are undeniably influential in the production of knowledge. Therefore, I have played both the role of ‘orchestrator and facilitator’ to the participants involved in this research project (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Also, I have approached my work from a relativist ontology. Relativism is described as “the view that there are no universal standards or criteria. What counts as true is a function of criteria which are internal and so relative to local cultures, historical periods, or socio-political interests” (Scott & Marshall, 2005: 559). Absolute truths do not exist, therefore constructions and their figurative ‘realities’ are able to be altered (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A relativist stance ties into my research question because I am interested in discovering how theatre initiatives influence, impact, or create understanding about the individual experiences of the female participants who are involved in them.

Positivist thinkers have considered a limitation of constructivist thinkers to be their denial of objective research by conducting subjective research (Mack, 2010). However, I do not accept the illusion of neutrality that some positivist researchers claim either. I do not present myself in the hierarchical role of the ‘expert,’ or attempt to present impossibly ‘objective’ findings. Total objectivity is a fallacy, and my research is approached with an awareness of how subjective research is. Mander (2010) argues that quantitative research often puts forth an ‘objective’ facade when, in reality, the beliefs and biases of the researcher influence their own work.

I recognize that my own preconceptions influence any work I undertake, and I have continued to write in first person throughout this research process to acknowledge that I am contributing my own voice to the work being created. I am a

young, Caucasian, Canadian woman with a university education in criminology and theatre. I possess a feminist world view, and that is reflected in the research that I initiate. Palys and Atchison (2008) direct researchers to recognize how their research project relates to their own life, and/or what has influenced them to take on this particular project. Personally, I have studied theatre for most of my life, and have been directly affected and influenced by my involvement in various arts environments. The integral role that theatre has in my own experiences has directed me to this research project.

When applying a constructivist paradigm, the notion of voice becomes paramount within this research as well. Grbich (2004) describes how the role of voice for researchers changes when they approach their work from a postmodern perspective (such as that of the constructivist paradigm). Ezzy (2002) contributes to the discussion of the role of voice when he states that “research should provide voice to those who are silenced or marginalised” (56). Through my research project, I am working to give voice to the marginalised population of criminalized women.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe the methodological process for a constructivist paradigm to be “hermeneutical and dialectical” (111). Therefore, this methodology required direct interactions between myself and the participants involved to evoke existing individual constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The emerging constructs were interpreted, and then compared and contrasted to create a more detailed, informed construction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). To properly conduct research which was epistemologically transactional and methodologically hermeneutical, I was required to seek out dialogue between myself and those individuals involved with

Clean Break. Transferring such knowledge from “one setting to another is the provision of vicarious experience, often supplied by case study reports” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 114). Therefore, in order to interact firsthand with these individuals and properly represent them in this project, I needed to conduct qualitative research.

In relation to the work I did, I also found my research question and intentions fitting well within Creswell’s (in Joubish et al., 2011) guidelines regarding reasons to choose to conduct qualitative research. Some main points from Creswell’s (in Joubish et al., 2011) guidelines include the following: that the research question begin with ‘how’ or ‘what’; that the topic chosen is something which needs to be explored extensively; that the topic being studied is being studied in its natural setting; and that the researcher has the opportunity to “act as an ‘active learner’ rather than expert for participants” (2086). Approaching this research from a constructivist paradigm demands that qualitative research be undertaken to aid in the process of giving voice.

Therefore, for this research, I primarily undertook a qualitative, exploratory approach. I chose a dominantly qualitative approach for several reasons beyond Creswell’s guidelines. First of all, the problematic issue of bias from practitioners within current literature indicated to me that this is a field that requires more detailed accounts about the relationships between theatre initiatives and criminalized populations. I could contribute a more ‘objective’ perspective (while still acknowledging my own subjectivity) to this field without a biased lens from pre-existing involvement in such practices. Also, to measure personal experience and growth, qualitative methods, such as interviews and observation, were the clearest means through which my research could properly be conducted.

However, although qualitative research was the best approach for my project, there are limitations to research that draws heavily upon qualitative methods. Castro, Kellison, Boyd, and Kopak (2010) describe how qualitative approaches often struggle to integrate and make associations between information from various sources in a reliable fashion. Qualitative research is also critiqued for often lacking “well-defined prescriptive procedures” (Morse in Castro et al., 2010: 343), which prevents ‘definitive’ conclusions (Castro et al., 2010: 343). In this project, I have heavily detailed my research procedures to ensure reliability, and to aid readers so that they can better understand where and how I made particular connections.

### **Definitions of Terms & Concepts**

In the introduction of this thesis I discussed what individuals Clean Break includes in the category of ‘women in conflict with the law’<sup>5</sup>. However, some of the terms used in this description needs to be defined as well, such as ‘remand,’ ‘bail,’ and ‘license’. So, for ‘remand’, *The Oxford Dictionary* describes a person on remand as having been placed, or brought back into custody, either until their hearing continues or the trial occurs (Remand, n.d.). In terms of ‘bail’, an individual can be put on bail when they pay money to be released from custody until an appointed time when they must return. Lastly, being ‘on license’ is what we refer to as being on probation in Canada. For an individual to be on probation, it means that they have been released from detention, and are subject to supervision to ensure good behaviour (Probation, n.d.). The women I observed, interacted with, and interviewed may have been

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<sup>5</sup> A refresher: Clean Break considers women ‘being in conflict with the law’ as being an individual that “may be in contact with the police, have been cautioned or sentenced for an offence, are on remand, on a community order, on bail, on license, in prison or known to a Youth Offending Team” (Clean Break).

experiencing any of these conditions while at Clean Break, so these definitions are important to this research project. It is also important to note that I favour the term 'criminalized' women, rather than women being at risk or in conflict with the law. Describing these women as criminalized acknowledges the process they have underwent where their activities have been deemed criminal. Working from a constructivist, feminist paradigm, I believe it is important to use language in which a connotation exists that addresses that something has been done *to* this population, rather than *by* this population – they are *criminalized*, rather than being *criminal*.

Another concept which emerges and needs further description is the use of the term 'transformation'. Within the data analysis, I describe the ways in which participants identify transformation or transformative experiences. Staying in line with the perspective that these women are being criminalized, I am not arguing that these women are being 'rehabilitated'. The concern of this research is not simply about if these women find themselves in conflict with the law again, but rather I am concerned with the transformative experiences that the participants describe. I am drawing from Shah and Marks (2004) when I identify transformative experiences for participants through whatever impact Clean Break may have on an individual's overall well-being. Personal development, feelings of fulfillment, and community contributions constitute this stronger sense of well-being (Shah & Marks, 2004). This clarification is important and feeds into the various discussions within the Data Analysis chapter of this thesis.

### **Research Design**

The following section details all aspects of research design for this thesis project. I will be describing the general characteristics of the two groups I recruited, and then

explain the setting in which the research will take place. I will then explain my sampling design, and discuss how I went about recruiting the populations sampled. The next subsection addresses the procedures that were followed for data collection, and then the presentation of instruments for this research. This section on research design directs readers at times to the appendices for further illustration of aspects of this thesis.

**Study population: characteristics.** I recruited two groups: the first includes students (criminalized women) at Clean Break, and the second group includes personnel at Clean Break. Both of these groups consist of residents of England, in the United Kingdom. Also, Clean Break is a women-only theatre company, so all of the participants interviewed were female.

I have conducted interviews, interacted with, and observed women who are current students, student graduates, and personnel at Clean Break. Outside of the Brazen young women's program, which accepts students as young as 17, to enroll in the education programme at Clean Break, the participants in this study were of legal age. Therefore, I have not interviewed any minors (including participants of the Brazen program). For employees, I have also required that, to be interviewed, they have firsthand interactions with the students who come to Clean Break. The case study took place in the last weeks of Clean Break's summer term, so all students interviewed have, at a minimum, 13 weeks experience on site. For personnel, they also needed to have worked within the company for at least six (6) months, so that they had a wealth of experience working with criminalized women. Each woman interviewed had also consented to speaking in English to avoid any communication barriers.

**Study setting.** The location in which this study was conducted was at The Clean Break Theatre Company, at 2 Patshull Road, in London, England.<sup>6</sup>

**Sampling design & procedures.** To find the population necessary for this research, I had conducted purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-random sample, in which the researcher uses their own judgment to select their sample because they have very specific requirements to be fulfilled (Neuman, 2009). With a particular interest in the personnel and students of Clean Break, I had directed my attention toward obtaining their participation in this project.

Clean Break participants were recruited in-person at various times throughout my visit there. I also requested that the personnel at Clean Break distribute recruitment letters<sup>7</sup> directly to the women students who met the criteria of the study prior to my arrival. Recruitment letters for the personnel at Clean Break were sent through e-mail, as well as by me, in-person, after I arrived. To avoid coercion, these women were specifically asked to contact me, and their involvement in the project remains anonymous.

The intent was to invite each student or personnel to participate in a one-on-one interview in-person, in a private room at Clean Break. However, the day before my flight to the UK, I was informed by an employee at Clean Break that I could no longer be supplied with one-on-one interviews with students. The staff at Clean Break were concerned with the potential ramifications of privately interviewing their potentially vulnerable students. This switch to group interviews exclusively with students

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<sup>6</sup> Please refer to the following video link for a clip about Clean Break:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FB5SoQgIQ0>

<sup>7</sup> Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the recruitment letter.

reshaped the interview aspect of my research design just before I was arriving on site. Therefore, I adapted and interviewed personnel one-on-one and interviewed Clean Break students in group settings.

This switch to group interviews impacted my research in both negative and positive ways. An implication of this design change was that all students involved in each group interview would know what other people in the group say, which changed the notion of anonymity in this study. Interviewing participants in a group setting also potentially meant that the discussions did not reach the same level of depth that a private interview could have achieved, because some participants may not have wanted to say certain things in front of others. However, within these group settings I also observed the student participants excitedly opening up to one another during the discussion, and making connections with one another that had not been made previously. Therefore, a positive implication of this change was that a much more communal environment was cultivated during these group interviews, and the participants were able to then walk away with new connections to one another. The interview dynamic was not just between researcher and interviewee, but between fellow students on site, and these connections could continue on long after I leave.

To ensure that potential participants who did not have access to e-mail or telephone were not excluded from this study, I made myself present on site as much as possible to provide information about this project and its recruitment process at Clean Break. I was available to provide details about this project in-person, and also provided students many opportunities to answer any questions that arose about the project so

that participants were fully informed. This process avoided the exclusion of potential participants who lacked access to internet or telephone.

**Information-collection procedures & instruments.** As part of my research, I conducted an exploratory case study of the theatre company Clean Break. Being interested in the topic of theatre initiatives for criminalized women, a case study of a current, well developed, female-specific institution provided me with a significant amount of information and insight on this largely unexplored topic. Case studies in research are considered a means through which a deep understanding can be provided, and they can also “open the door to the processes created and used by individuals involved in the phenomenon, event, group, or organization under study” (Weick in Berg & Lune, 2012: 328).

In this case study, I conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews. My aim was to obtain at least 8 to 10 interviews from an array of people involved with Clean Break. I also aspired to interview individuals who were currently participating, or had previously participated, in the programming (regardless of if they were considered to have ‘successfully completed’ the programs or not), as well as personnel of Clean Break. Throughout these interviews, I practiced ‘deep listening,’ which entails “listening for meanings, not just facts, and listening in such a way that prompts more profound reflection from the interviewee” (Sheftel & Zembrzycki, 2010: 199).

Once consent forms<sup>8</sup> were signed by participants, these interviews were recorded with an audio device and transcribed. From such interviews, I was able to better explore how theatre initiatives have potentially influenced criminalized women

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<sup>8</sup> Please refer to Appendix B for a copy of the consent forms.

in relation to their own experiences. I also observed a course offered for women in this program, and field notes were taken of my observations.

**Presentation of instruments.** Please see Appendix C for my interview guide, and Appendix D for my observation guide. By conducting research that was only partially structured, I allowed myself to remain open to the various directions that interviews and observations could go. The interview guide was created as a reminder for me as a researcher of what aspects of this project were important to me, as well as for the ethics board to obtain an understanding of the type of questions that could be asked. However, they were simply guidelines for the many potential directions that an interview could go in. I did not prevent participants from discussing what they thought needed to be discussed. Also, by asking open-ended questions, I was better able to understand how the women being interviewed experience the world (Labuschagne, 2003).

Regarding the interviews, participants were asked to answer questions in a semi-structured private or group interview once per person. These interviews ranged in time, and lasted for approximately one hour each. They were not required to answer any question that they preferred not to answer, and were able to stop the interview sooner if they preferred. This approach was potentially going to be a limitation in my research project because I could not guarantee the amount of Clean Break participants that would elect to be interviewed, and I was unable to pull from another population outside of Clean Break if the amounts were too sparse.

In terms of the observation aspect of the case study, with staff permission, I simply observed a course and the general environment at Clean Break. I did not

request anything of the participants for my observations. I used this opportunity to observe and understand how these theatre initiatives function, and how the women involved engage with them. When on site I was able to observe an employee meeting, an introductory acting course, lunch hours for those on site, and the everyday activity throughout the business day at Clean Break. This everyday activity included students working on assignments on site, personnel coming and going to meetings and courses, students preparing for performances, and the women socializing on site. Observations at Clean Break were noted in a personal notebook privately after such opportunities to avoid affecting the environment any further as a researcher on site.

### **Information & Data Processing Procedures**

For my research, I conducted an inductive analysis. Inductive analyses require “detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher” (Thomas, 2006: 238). However, simply based off of the pre-existing literature, I began this case study anticipating certain themes. Themes that I had anticipated arising from my transcripts included the following: behaviour and attitude changes, such as improved attitudes and a lack of re-offending (Day, 2013; Tett et al., 2012; Johnson et al., 2011; Ezell & Levy, 2003; Brewster, 1983); gaining a sense of confidence and/or newfound purpose (Tett et al., 2012; Tocci, 2007; White, 1998); working on identity, and building a sense of voice (Tett et al., 2012; White, 1998); and developing new relationships, and/or building trust (Tett et al., 2012; Tocci, 2007; Ezell & Levy, 2003).

From my transcribed interviews, I had conducted a thematic analysis of the resulting transcripts to discover reoccurring themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue

that this type of analysis provides “a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data” (78). A thematic analysis is described as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Boyatzis in Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). In particular, I applied Attride-Stirling’s (2001) method of thematic networks analysis. Attride-Stirling (2001) articulates the addition of networks by stating that “thematic analyses seek to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels, and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes” (387). This process entails coding, identifying and refining themes, arranging themes into networks, exploring these networks, and interpreting patterns (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

In order to conduct a thematic networks analysis, there were three types of themes within which the transcripts were organized: basic themes, organizing themes, and global themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Attride-Stirling (2001) describes the three themes as tiered, where the basic themes are the lowest level, initial themes; organizing themes then group basic themes into batches of issues that are similar and, therefore, the themes become more abstract; and then global themes group organizing themes together to encapsulate prevailing themes within the transcripts. The resulting ‘web’ that is built from this process is important because it gives “fluidity to the themes and [emphasizes] the interconnectivity throughout the network” (Attride-Stirling, 2001: 389). In relation to my epistemology and research question, this technique was very helpful because it illustrated the steps of my interpretation of the transcripts, and honoured the words of the participants through this interconnected network.

Following Attride-Stirling’s (2001) steps, I began by open coding the transcripts. Open coding is a preliminary tool for a qualitative, inductive approach because it allows

the analyst to create and collect headings throughout the data from reading through it, and to then freely generate categories to code from (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Once open coding was completed, the resulting categories recorded throughout the data were put into a list, and then these categories were grouped under ordered headings (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). This process allowed the material to be further collapsed into similar sections. Boyatzis (1998) describes a 'good' code as one which "captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon," (x) and it can emerge from one or multiple themes. Through subjective interpretation, it is the responsibility of the researcher to group categories together (Dey in Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Themes then arose from the coded material and were arranged into the tiers of themes that were discussed. From these developed networks, I was then able to describe and explore how they interact, as well as interpret whatever patterns arose.

However, by conducting a thematic networks analysis, I have inevitably, to some extent, condensed and interpreted the words of others. I consider this a limitation to my approach that I remain reflective about. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that, when it comes to giving voice to the participants involved, there are limitations to any research methodology. To counter the amount of editing done to my transcripts, I incorporated the network aspect to thematic analysis, and also used larger direct quotes within my thesis to avoid speaking on behalf of others as much as possible.

### **Validity & Reliability**

Often qualitative research is critiqued for its perceived 'inability' to ensure validity and reliability. However, there are many aspects to a qualitative research project which ensure these measures; we just need to move away from our traditional

conceptions of quantitative techniques in research. Wainwright (1997) argues that, for qualitative research, we need to “re-conceptualise validity in terms of reflexive practice” (9). Reflexivity is a personal strategy for researchers which allow them to be conscious of their own role in the research process (Wainwright, 1997; Borland, 1991).

An overt practice of reflexivity that is a part of this research process is the implementation and use of a research journal. Through a journal, I have worked to clarify how my “own experiences, values, and positions of privilege in various hierarchies” are integral to the choices made throughout my research project (Ortlipp, 2008: 695). This detailed, documentary-style method further ensured reliability in my research and it fit well within this constructivist, feminist project (Ortlipp, 2008). McNaughton (in Ortlipp, 2008) states that the aim of a journal is to the make the research process that the researcher undertakes “as visible and transparent as possible” (697). I approached my project as a reflexive researcher with a relativist ontology, so this journaling technique aided me in achieving a more coherent project. Also, maintaining a reflexive journal allows for inevitable biases to be visible and understood to the reader (Ortlipp, 2008). This does not mean that quantitative research does not have biases within its research, but that with this qualitative approach, I have at least acknowledged my own biases. This technique is an answer to Chenail’s (1995) suggestion that researchers present ‘back-stage’ details of their research process to prove their own reliability. Also, a research journal is a strategy which can be incorporated in Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) guidelines for establishing trustworthiness in research.

Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Chenail (1995) articulate how qualitative research can be reliable and valid through establishing this concept of trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline the four aspects that contribute to trustworthiness as being: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For Chenail (1995), being 'open' throughout the research process is an important aspect to creating valuable and reliable work. Also, a version of 'external validity' can be achieved through thick description within a research project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wainwright, 1997). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that, in a case study such as my own, I need to describe my observations in detail, so that this project can potentially relate to other contexts. Also, within the section of 'confirmability,' is the aspect of reflexivity, which would be where a journal plays an important role (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Ethical Safeguards & Precautions**

Conducting research with criminalized women, a vulnerable and possibly captive population, made various ethical procedures extremely necessary throughout this research process. In June, 2013, I received full ethics approval through the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board<sup>9</sup>. However, many more ethical practices outside of receiving ethical approval were entrenched within my research. As Guillemin and Gillam (2004) have stated, "ethical research is much more than research that has gained approval of a research ethics committee" (273). Before even beginning field work, a researcher must conduct a considerable amount of self exploration, so that they understand where they stand ethically at any crossroads they may have to face when conducting research with human beings.

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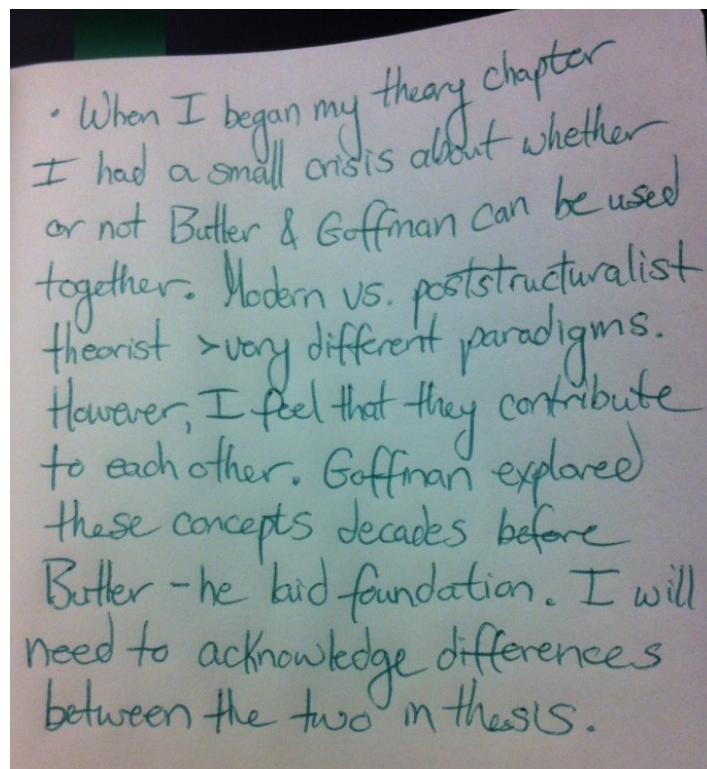
<sup>9</sup> Please refer to Appendix E for a copy of the ethics approval notice.

The relationship that forms between a researcher and a participant can greatly influence the stories that people share (Flicker, 2004). Palys and Lowman (2000) describe how, without trust between the researcher and participant, it is unlikely that participants will feel inclined to share their own sensitive information. To gain trust, the researcher must ensure that all measures have been taken to protect the participants involved. I ensured that the personal information collected is viewed by as few sets of eyes as possible, and I also implemented Israel's (2004) recommendations for limiting the disclosure of personal information by altering details that can be traced back to particular participants (such as real names, specific ages, distinguishable features, etc.), and by restricting access to data collected. The data collected is only available to myself, my thesis supervisor, and the individuals who, on request, can obtain access to their own transcripts by registered mail.

By practicing ethics of caring and accountability, I engaged as a researcher in a more interactive fashion with the research participants I worked with (Mander, 2010). Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman (2010) also describe the ethical need for researchers to "add value to the lives of the people they are researching," as well as "recognizing them as subjects in the process and not simply sources of data" (231). I also agree with Gervais and Estevez (2011) when they state that participants need to be seen as "real, living, capable people and genuine research partners who deserve to be listened to, respected and included fully in the research process" (4). By looking to give voice to the participants involved in my research, I am looking to improve their well being by offering them the ability to openly reflect and speak on their own experiences

and oppression. I also intend to remain in close contact with Clean Break for potential future visits.

Reflexivity is an important aspect of my research in regards to ethical practices as well. Sheftel and Zembrzycki (2010) argue that conducting interviews requires the researcher to possess “the highest level of both self-awareness and sensitivity to others” (192). In their article, Sheftel and Zembrzycki (2010) also discuss their own experiences with challenging interviews and choices that must be faced by researchers, such as what to do when racist statements are made. These researchers argue that, by working through issues such as these, we are able to become more rigorous, and that research involving interviews is entirely a process that involves trial and error (Sheftel & Zembrzycki, 2010).



• When I began my theory chapter I had a small crisis about whether or not Butler & Goffman can be used together. Modern vs. poststructuralist theorist > very different paradigms. However, I feel that they contribute to each other. Goffman explored these concepts decades before Butler - he laid foundation. I will need to acknowledge differences between the two in thesis.

*A journal sample of mine during the writing process.*

## Chapter 5: Data Analysis

### Participant Profiles

The following is a general description of each participant who was interviewed for this research project at Clean Break in London, England. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of these individuals.

#### **Students:**

- A) *Amelia* is a reserved redhead who had a background in theatre prior to being a student at Clean Break. She is a student graduate and is currently acting in a Clean Break production.
- B) *Carry* is soft-spoken and is a current student at Clean Break. She has black hair, and identifies herself as a mother. Carry describes herself as originally nervous about participating in theatre work, but is now interested in some form of career in theatre.
- C) *Donna* is a lively black-haired woman, who brought a lot of joy to her interview. She is currently a student at Clean Break.
- D) *Emma* is a vibrant black-haired woman who had an interest in theatre prior to being a student at Clean Break. She identifies herself as a mother and is a student graduate of Clean Break. She is also currently acting in a Clean Break production.
- E) *Jackie* is a passionate blonde woman who had a background in the arts prior to enrolling at Clean Break. She is currently a student at Clean Break.
- F) *Linda* is a welcoming brunette woman, who brought a laid back attitude to her interview. She is a currently a student at Clean Break.

*G) Nicky* is an engaging brunette woman who had a background in theatre prior to being a student at Clean Break. She is a student graduate, as well as an actor in a Clean Break production.

*H) Rose* is a laid-back blonde woman who identifies herself as a mother. She is currently a student at Clean Break.

**Personnel:**

*I) Gwen* is a long term employee at Clean Break who possesses passion and drive. She identifies herself as a mother as well.

*J) Holly* considers herself to be newer to Clean Break in contrast to many of its employees, but she has still been working for this company for a long period of time. She is intelligent and dedicated as an employee at Clean Break.

*K) Miranda* is a relatively new employee at Clean Break. She is enthusiastic and eager to continue to learn while working at Clean Break.

*L) Sylvia* is a long term employee of Clean Break. She is invested in every facet of the company.

## Introduction

The following chapter presents the research findings from the thematic networks analysis. This discussion is framed in line with the theoretical framework of this thesis. Therefore, the following themes have emerged from the thematic networks analysis, but the focus of each theme is theoretically inspired. The results are broken down into three dominant themes, some of which contain subthemes. Alternatively, using Attride-Stirling's (2001) terminology, there are three global themes, with some possessing various organizing themes and basic themes<sup>10</sup>. The three emergent global themes are the following: 1) *The Roles of the Arts, the Environment, & Voice*; 2) *Transformation & Growth*; and 3) *Challenges, Limitations, & Barriers*. To have a better understanding of prevalence of each of the global themes, the amount of times a relevant quote emerges has been tabulated. Therefore, *The Roles of the Arts, the Environment, & Voice* is the most prevalent theme with 113 quotes, followed by *Transformation & Growth* with 105 quotes, and ending with *Challenges, Limitations, & Barriers* with 63 quotes. Before beginning, it is important to recognize and acknowledge that these themes often intersect and intimately relate to one another. This is a fluid exploration where themes often overlap with one another as participants describe their own experiences in relation to the subject of criminalized women.

The first global theme, *The Roles of the Arts, the Environment, & Voice*, is analyzed through a discussion around three organizing themes. These organizing themes include the following headings: A) Role of Theatre and the Arts, B) Environment at Clean Break, and C) Role of Voice. Within each of these organizing themes are smaller

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<sup>10</sup> Please refer to Appendix F for diagrams illustrating each thematic network.

'basic' themes, and they are dictated by the ways in which the participants discuss each theme. In this global theme, we see discussions around the different and important ways in which theatre is used at Clean Break. An emphasis is also placed on the role of the environment of Clean Break for participants. For the role of voice, the discussion often connects theatre with the experiences of exploring and discovering the voices of these women.

The second global theme, *Transformation & Growth*, is also its own organizing theme. This is the most dominant organizing theme, and the discussion regarding transformation and growth is vast. This section will look into the ways in which students experience change and growth in relation to studying at Clean Break.

The third and final global theme, *Challenges, Limitations, & Barriers*, contains two organizing themes through which discussions emerge. This global theme is divided into the following organizing themes: a) External Challenges and b) Personal Challenges. In External Challenges, issues such as the political climate are discussed. Whereas, Personal Challenges looks at common personal issues for participants, such as issues stemming from backgrounds in mental health, prison or addiction.

### **The Roles of the Arts, the Environment, & Voice**

**Role of theatre and the arts.** Discussion around the role of theatre and the arts is quite prevalent. Overall, this topic can be divided into two organizing themes. The first subgroup would be the discussion around *the role that theatre plays as a lens*, which helps us to better see and understand the experiences of women who are at risk or are in conflict with the law. The second common discussion area revolves around

*the role of theatre and the arts being utilized as a tool* to help the students who come to Clean Break.

From a cultural criminology framework, Clean Break fills an important void by using theatre to help illuminate the experiences around being criminalized. Fahy (2012) argues that, by putting criminalized populations on stage, it “allows audiences to ‘see’ the humanity of these figures and in turn recognize some of the social injustices of incarceration” (89). Since its inception, Clean Break has helped people to better understand the experiences of criminalized women by using theatre as a lens into their lives. Long-term employee Sylvia describes how, from its very roots, Clean Break has used theatre as a medium through which we can better understand the experiences of women in relation to the penal system. The company was initiated by two women prisoners who, while in prison, wanted to tell their stories. These prisoners were able to write and perform plays about women’s experiences with the penal system, and eventually they were also able to show these plays to the public. Ferrell et al. (2008) argue that it is important to move past narrow conceptualizations of crime so that a more holistic, human experience is understood. At Clean Break employees and students join together to shine light on the unique experiences of criminalized women.

This tradition of using theatre as a lens continues through the female playwrights who are commissioned by the company and this is a topic that multiple employees address. Staff member Sylvia explains that the playwrights they commission for the company are hired to create a lens around the experiences of criminalized women. Cheliotis’ (2012) theory around the arts supplying an alternative lens to understanding the politics behind crime control comes to life with theatre practices at

Clean Break. Sylvia describes how the plays that are produced by Clean Break end up “looking at whole different aspects of women and the criminal justice system. So that's really grown the whole artistic area of work, and that continues to be a really important voice for the company.” Through performance, insight can be given to the issues that criminalized women experience – a topic that may otherwise commonly go unrecognized.

By creating a lens which is unique and based on firsthand experiences of criminalization, new social narratives around the lived experiences of crime and deviance are introduced. Butler (1990) argues that resisting power mechanisms is possible, and that this resistance allows for individuals to adjust their own conceptions of identity while still working within the system. Practicing resistance is especially pertinent for those who do not conform to societal expectations imposed upon them (Butler, 2011), such as criminalized women. Criminalized women are commonly viewed as deviants from their gender expectations that are imposed on them and considered to not be fulfilled (Worrall, 1990). Landry (2013) argues that it is through “discursive counter statements” (4) that the political realm can be challenged. Student graduate Emma practices resistance within the system by using theatre as a lens into the experiences of criminalized women. She is currently acting in a Clean Break production that tours throughout London. The play that she is acting in presents challenging issues for criminalized women, such as addiction and how it affects relationships and life choices. Emma describes the difficult issues that the play raises and how this begins a conversation with its audiences. She discusses how the production looks at women and addiction, and acknowledges that “the fact that if you

stay in one place, even if you want to be clean...[that] outside world where you were horrible and that person you don't like is still there." This production potentially relates to the experiences of many of the women who study at Clean Break. When I viewed the performance of this production it was followed by an audience discussion. The audience of the group I was a part of primarily consisted of current Clean Break students. Showing how women can struggle with addiction on stage visually illustrates how challenging these experiences can be and it instigates a conversation around the topic with the audience.

For employees at Clean Break, the fact that theatre is being used as a lens and tool is an important focus of the company. In a conversation around changing the views of people who are cynical about theatre, employee Sylvia describes how theatre can be used to affect change, and can help us to better "understand the particular needs of women." Also, Miranda, a newer employee to Clean Break, admits that before she started working for the company she was not interested in theatre. However, after seeing how it can be used as a lens into the experiences of women who have been in contact with the penal system, her perspective changed. She remarks at how being introduced to the role that theatre can play as a lens has affected her: "I feel that my point of view of theatre has really changed being here, and I've changed."

Every employee also expresses interest in using theatre as a medium through which social justice and change can be achieved. The critical nature of cultural criminology is apparent in Clean Break's efforts to problematize current crime control policies (Ferrell et al., 2008). Holly's passion for theatre and social justice comes through when she describes the role of theatre at Clean Break in the following quote:

... I love what Clean Break does, and I think it...the heart of it is a real belief in social justice, and acknowledgement of the specificity of women's experience of criminal justice, and of the potential for theatre to initiate real change in their lives. So it, I think, yeah...what it does is very unique and incredibly effective. This topic of discussion rides the line between theatre being used as a lens into the experiences of women and theatre being used as a tool for change.

The productions created at Clean Break expose what Ferrell et al. (2008) consider imperative from a cultural criminology perspective; the theatre work at Clean Break brings to the forefront the lived experiences of criminalized individuals. The media's ability to distort the lines between reality and fiction influences how crime is depicted for the masses (Ferrell et al., 2008). The lack of widespread access to these lived experiences is especially evident in one performance where family and friends were invited to be audience members at Clean Break. There was some disparity between what audience members expected to witness and what they experienced. Soon after I chose a seat of my own, a well-dressed woman in her forties came in and sat beside me. A friend of a criminalized woman in the show, this audience member leans into me with a surprised look on her face and says: "My goodness! Is it ever nice here. I was not expecting this! I was expecting just some black box cube." After sharing some small talk, she was able to sit back in her seat and be more relaxed in this unanticipated environment of scenery, sounds, and props. This audience member was able to be confronted with the issue that mediated processes dominantly frame our experiences in relation to those who have been criminalized (Ferrell et al., 2008; Carrabine, 2012; McAviney, 2011). By producing theatre pieces with those who have

been criminalized, room is created for cultural reproductions to be challenged (Ferrell et al., 2008).

Frigon's (2014) performative criminology comes into play as, through theatre work, space is created for those present to think critically and challenge previous misconceptions. By uniting theatre with criminology, audience members turn into participants in that they are able to challenge previous understandings of the penal system through a new, arts-based medium (Frigon, 2014). They theoretically become participants in the social conceptualization and dissemination of information engaged with during a show. Fahy (2012) describes how, from a performance, an intimate connection can be made between those present, and that this connection can be how social change is initiated. Audience members who entered the theatre space silent and tentative left the space boisterous and proud of the criminalized women in their lives who just delivered a multitude of scenes pertaining to personal experiences and challenges in relation to the penal system. After the show one man loudly bragged about how he just witnessed a whole different side of a woman he knew who acted in the show. Arts-based practices allow us to engage with the world in an alternative way (Williams, 2012), and this theatre production allowed for an alternative lens to exist for its audience members. Williams (2012) argues that the arts allow for reflection and engagement to occur, and that doing so can lead to learning and transformation. The journey that the family and friends of criminalized women experienced from before to after watching the show may be evidence of one of the first steps in a process of a larger, cultural transformation.

There is also discussion around theatre and the arts being used as a tool to help the students at Clean Break. Theatre is used as a tool to achieve many different changes, whether intended or not. Theatre being as a tool to help its practitioners reconnect with their own bodies is one aspect which arose. When talking about the students, employee Holly has observed that “physically they do get more comfortable in their bodies through the use of drama and movement.” On top of physical changes, theatre has also been used as a tool to aid these women to also figuratively grow and change individually.

By practicing theatre work, these students are potentially able to break the process of repetition through which performativity is culturally reinforced (Butler, 1999). By breaking this process of repetition, cultural expectations of individuals are less legitimized, and binary constructs can possibly be dispelled (Butler, 1999). For example, Miranda discusses her observations around theatre being used as a tool to personally change oneself, or even challenge the concept of identity. She says that theatre allows people to evolve:

... beyond the identity that they, kind of, get stuck with or kind of labelled with, and I guess as well it helps me see that, you know, we have many aspects to ourselves. It's not just criminal or noncriminal, you know?

Through practicing theatre participants can potentially challenge binaries and conduct their own identity work. Weedon (1987) describes our subjectivities as “constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak” (33). Theatre work with criminalized women offers new ways in which individuals may think or speak, and therefore break restrictive patterns or binaries.

Students also acknowledge ways in which theatre can be used as a tool for change in their own lives. When theatre is described as a tool for change, it is associated with positive changes. While applying her makeup, Jackie describes how today is her last day in her dance and movement class, and how different this class was for her this semester. In the following quote Jackie describes how she has used theatre as a tool for positive change:

[This class was] more uplifting, enthusiastic, giving motivation to come back to fitness, or perhaps even dancing because I used to dance in the past. So, without realizing, you open new doors of opportunities, and you connect with girls, which is amazing...this is saving my.....

Although a potentially important thought was left unsaid for Jackie, the opportunity for change emerges from her words. Theatre is also considered to be a tool through which participants can reconnect with themselves spiritually. According to students, Jackie specifically here, “you can get flat so easily, and drained.” Jackie explains how she felt spiritually uplifted participating in a dance and movement course, and that “in general you can feel when you hear your spirit becomes alive.” It is common for the students of Clean Break to discuss theatre as a tool that enables them in various ways to experience positive change. In Jackie’s experience theatre has elevated her mood, motivated her to revisit fitness and dance, helped her to create strong relationships with other women, as well as reconnect with herself spiritually.

The theme of theatre as a tool for healing continues with student graduate and actor Nicky. Nicky describes using theatre as a tool to help her to creatively “take the

pain of what's inside". In the following quote Nicky explores how practicing theatre has been a healing process for her:

It is like a creative release. You need to be in that creativity, because out there it's just too painful. And we've seen life, we've felt life, we've been...had the door shut in our faces...you know, all that stuff, you know. What we've been through.

And then you come here and it's like 'Right. Let it all out.' And it's so healing.....

Through the arts Nicky is able to better face her daily challenges that she experiences in the outside world. Theatre is both an escape and a tool that can heal. Employee Holly also describes how, for Clean Break's students, theatre "allows them to practice kind of different ways of being that they then absolutely put into practice in their lives outside of here." Theatre can be used as a tool to illicit something from its participants, and potentially incite change.

Theatre performances can exemplify to audiences the ways in which this art form can illicit change in those who practice it. Butler's (1990) postulation that identity is created from the construct of gender congealing over time on the body can be potentially countered within theatre work. Current student Linda discusses how visually evident it is that theatre can bring something out in a person from watching them perform. She describes how:

... you'll see how people that you wouldn't dream would be so expressive. It comes out. And it's like playing, because some of these courses it's like playing – dancing, theatre. It's games, but it's a side of you that you need to bring out that you've forgotten about kind of thing.

Similar to Jackie's discussion around reconnecting with herself spiritually, Linda explains how, by practicing theatre, women are teasing out important aspects of themselves. To be considered a 'good' wife and mother, women are expected to possess 'naturally feminine' qualities "such as patience, emotion, and self-sacrifice" (Weedon, 1987: 3). Theatre work with these women gives them the opportunity to break free of the lifelong repetition through which facets of gender appear natural rather than constructed (Butler, 1990). Linda is describing how criminalized women at Clean Break are learning how to explore themselves outside of being a form of identity specifically in relation to their gender.

Finding a new means of self expression through theatre also relates to Goffman's (1959) work on the presentation of self. Goffman (1959) emphasizes the need for individuals to learn a large variety of expressions, including how to interact with others through voice, body, and facial expressions. These skills cannot necessarily be verbally taught, but they are important for individuals to express themselves in a coherent way socially (Goffman, 1959). Clean Break has potentially found a means through which women can access more tools for self expression by introducing exploratory theatre practices to these women. Employee Miranda reflects on this idea in her statement that theatre gives "women the ability to express themselves." She states: "I see that it has an impact on them, and I see that they tap into that and use that and that helps them." Goffman (1959) also describes how gaining further tools of expression can counteract anxiety that these individuals may have felt without these skills. This potential new ability of expression can also be introduced into other aspects of these student's lives as well, such as external interactions. Theatre is a tool for learning and applying new

knowledge. When discussing the role of voice in the lives of these women, this organizing theme will be further explored as well.

**Environment at Clean Break.** Another dominant organizing theme revolves around the role of the environment at Clean Break. Participants gave their perspectives on the environment in relation to it being a women-only space, as well as how the environment is for them in general while at Clean Break. When first coming to Clean Break, students have varied perspectives on what to expect working in a women-only environment. For example, employee Gwen acknowledges how some students start at the company very keen, while others are quite apprehensive. She argues that “people come with a range of different assumptions about what it's going to be like.” For current students Jackie and Carry, coming into a women-only environment was something to be apprehensive about at first. While Jackie had a negative experience with a gendered environment in her past, Carry had never really been around women at all prior to Clean Break. Employee Holly also explains how, in her experience, “younger women didn't seem to recognize why or what the benefits would be until they were here.”

Although Jackie had a negative experience communicating with women previously at a female treatment centre, another current student, Rose, describes how Clean Break offers a very healthy women-only environment. Rose acknowledges that not everyone may get along all the time, but “there's no arguments or no fighting or anything. But yeah. It's all adult-like. All grown-ups sort of thing.” According to Goffman's theory of social interactions, individuals gain a stronger sense of self when

their interactions are validated by audiences (Branaman, 1997). Clean Break emphasizes and validates healthy relationships and interactions for all women on site.

Employees also discuss the role conflict has in Clean Break's environment. Gwen acknowledges that the environment is not "some idyll of everyone's lovely to each other at all." However, Miranda argues that, in her experience, the student support is so strong that, "if the women are having regular contact with student support it means that they're able to offload, so it does not get to a stage where it comes as a bit, in a way, overwhelming or unbearable." From these responses it appears that conflict between women at Clean Break is kept to a minimum and strong student support maintains this environment.

Another common perspective is that a women-only environment provides support to those working on site. For Miranda, this is her first time working in a gendered environment and she describes her positive experience with it:

I think, how I feel, is that all the women here are supportive, and they always have everyone's best interests at heart, and the companies best interests at heart, and it's just driven by the desire to have everyone feel unified, really. So, I have just had a fantastic experience working here with women, and I love it. I feel safe, I feel understood, I feel supported massively...

Participants describing Clean Break as providing an environment of support and unification is not uncommon.

Identity work is another way in which students engage with the environment at Clean Break. Butler (1990) explains how gender binaries of 'male' verses 'female' appear seemingly inevitable and, in turn, these constructs shape individual identities.

Goffman (1959) also describes how individuals put a great deal of effort into concealing aspects of themselves that are not considered 'ideal' socially, such as women who defy traditional gender role expectations. However, participants at Clean Break discuss its women-only environment as a potential means through which such cultural constructs can be challenged and individual identities outside of such restrictive binaries can be further developed. Student graduate Amelia describes how Clean Break's gendered environment has allowed her to better build her own identity. Currently acting for Clean Break's graduate company, Amelia states that, after being away from the company for a few weeks, "quite often I just get emotional when I come back because I feel like I am allowed to be who I am, and everyone else can encourage and support that, and just value that." Overall, an association exists between the environment at Clean Break and positive feelings of support.

When describing their own experiences at Clean Break, both employees and students also identify the space as being safe for them. A women-only environment creates a safe space in which female students are able to study. Goffman (1959) explains how, in terms of social interactions, it is common for women to underplay "expressions of wealth, capacity, spiritual strength, or self-respect" (38). A cultural norm of male dominance therefore flourishes and women remain substandard (Goffman, 1959). By cultivating a women-only environment at Clean Break, students are given the opportunity to explore and challenge contributing to a patriarchal social framework. Holly describes how students have relayed that having a safe space is liberating, and that it "means that they feel free and unintimidated." Current students such as Linda, Donna, and Carry echo this relationship between environment and

safety. After describing working in a women-only space, Linda states that Clean Break “feels sort of safe and protected. There is comfort and sisterhood vibe going on here.”

By conducting identity work and exploring oneself, the environment at Clean Break is also considered fun for those studying there. It is common for students to incorporate experiences of having fun in relation to their time at Clean Break. Student graduate Amelia describes how, although from many different backgrounds, women can come together at Clean Break “and just really have fun and support each other.” Carry and Donna converse together about how, even when doing a final performance for a course, the teacher encourages them to relax and, as Donna states, “just have fun with it! That was a good thing. Yeah.” This safe and supportive environment introduces levity into the lives of these criminalized women. Another current student, Rose, also articulates her own positive experiences with the environment on site. Rose laughs as she describes how she was at first agitated at the idea of a lot of writing, but then found the learning environment to be more “like I am in games, really.” Inhibitions and constructed societal expectations are dropped as an environment of playing and fun is cultivated.

Revisiting Jackie and Carry from the beginning of this discussion around environment, we can see how their perspectives change regarding studying at a women-only space. After identifying their original concerns around the space, both women articulate how their experiences with the women-only environment on site are actually very positive. In particular, Jackie passionately explains that “you meet here great people, which is amazing. When you’re vulnerable and, you know, it helps. This place – it’s amazing. It’s just...Yeah, it’s...I am speechless to be honest with you.” An

environment of encouragement and support is important for those involved with Clean Break. Employee Holly explains how Clean Break's "particular methodology and pedagogy is very positive and affirming and encouraging." Donna, another current student, also contributes to the discussion around how Clean Break fosters a positive environment. Donna states that she finds the environment to be positive and energizing, and she laughs when she says that "it makes you want to just get involved all the time and don't want to let go of the place." Deep rooted and meaningful connections are cultivated through this women-only environment. Newer staff member Miranda describes how she has found that "a lot of women come early to have their breakfast here ... way before class begins so that they can just be in the environment." For current student Linda the environment is positive and inclusive:

... the lady who cooks lunch is one of us. And, you know, a lot of the people who work or are helping or are training here are also ex-graduates of Clean Break. So, it has got a very positive, fostering atmosphere between us I think.

Women who come to Clean Break are potentially making long term bonds because of the positive environment that is experienced while present.

The environment described is one that is positive through such descriptors as: accepting, peaceful, and comfortable. Student graduate Nicky admits her perspective of learning in a women-only environment when she states, "I feel I needed to be around women. I needed to be around people that understood and got it, and I quite like the fact that it's real." For current student Rose the environment is so supportive and accepting that she describes her time at Clean Break to be an escape from the rest of her life. After taking a shower on site, Rose sits down with me to state that "you get out

of the normal world, you know? The hustle and bustle, you know? Here is just, you can, yeah, breathe basically. [...] I mean relaxing and everything.” For another current student, Carry, the appeal of the environment at Clean Break was immediately apparent once on site. Carry describes how she felt on her very first visit:

When I came for information day, I sat in that room and cried because I could just feel the...what it was....the atmosphere in the room. There was so much peace, and joy, and happiness, and it was hope that, you know, you could change if you want to.

The peaceful environment elicited an emotional response from Carry that gave her hope for her future.

From my own experience of being at Clean Break I found it to echo many of the comments made in this discussion around environment. When I entered the building for the first time I was immediately brought into a discussion about a woman in Texas who planned to speak for 13 hours straight to protest an abortion bill that wanted to close multiple abortion clinics. Employees and volunteers chatted excitedly at the front desk about this feminist protest for women’s rights. This discussion immediately showed me how inclusive, engaged, and invested the women at Clean Break were. For the two weeks following this conversation there were many instances where a background environment to the everyday hustle and bustle will remain vivid in my mind. The sounds of women singing, rehearsing lines, chatting, and laughing were so consistent during business days that I could not record an interview without these background noises. In a hallway just off from the reception area there is a large collage entitled ‘Child of Mine’ that depicts different images of mothers and children from

around the world. Across from it is a selection of magazines for anyone interested in reading them. I am drawn to and flip through an issue of a magazine called 'Women in Prison: The magazine for women affected by the criminal justice system'. There is a bowl of apples sitting out in the dining room area, Clean Break policies posted on the walls of the studios, and poster boards that advertise community opportunities. I personally experienced a positive, supportive, fun, safe, women-only environment while at Clean Break as well.

**Role of voice.** The role of voice is also a theme which emerges from the data collected. Being in both an arts-based and women-only environment, the role of voice is an important topic for all women at Clean Break. Employee Gwen admits that she often takes for granted how positive her experiences are working in a women-only environment is, and how it gives voice to each person there. However, she recognizes this fact when she is "in mixed environments and people are kind of talking other people down, and enjoying the sound of their own voice". Experiences with the role of voice at work are very positive for employees because they often feel heard and respected.

Also, although the environment at Clean Break is strictly for women, there is a multiplicity of voices present at any given time. Long term employee Sylvia discusses how students vary greatly regarding identifying factors such as race, age, sexuality, and even disabilities or mental health needs. By creating a space that is conducive for group discussions of personal struggles, participants are able to recognize that their own failures are often actually socially produced and are common struggles for women with similar experiences (Weedon, 1987). This women-only environment can give

criminalized women the opportunity to rework their own understandings of personal experiences in relation to social productions (Weedon, 1987). Being in a space that offers a multiplicity of voices is important to the students at Clean Break. Student graduate Nicky emphasizes this point when she talks about how powerful it is to be in a space of women with different, but still very similar experiences. Nicky argues that “there's just something about the bonding, and how powerful that is, the voice of a woman, all coming from different...similar...but dysfunction, and low self worth, no...yeah...kind of just been smashed to pieces really.” The multiplicity of voices is unified through the women’s various struggles that would have brought them to Clean Break for help. Their stories and voices are varied, but they are all still unified under the roof of Clean Break.

Butler’s (2011) discussion around performativity entails individuals both physically and verbally representing themselves in relation to understandings around gender binaries. From one of her own interviews regarding theatre practices with criminalized women, Hughes (1998) has a participant explain how social conditioning influences the demeanor of these women. An observation from an Instructional Officer and Drama Co-ordinator is that “women are told to sit down and be quiet and tend to feel so guilty about who they actually are, they want to hide themselves and their feelings” (Dickinson in Hughes, 1998: 49). However, through Clean Break’s focus on theatre work, women participants are offered a unique way to experiment in a safe space with their voices. Employee Holly argues that Clean Break offers a space to women participants in which they can hear their own voices and feel confident. In the

following quote Holly explains how she has seen students learn the power of their own voices through theatre:

... a lot of the women reflected that they hadn't known the power of their own voice, and haven't had the confidence to say what they wanted to say until they had done that as a character in a performance class. And in doing that they realized that they can put that into practice.

New connections to their voices are made for students at Clean Break, and the women have a unique opportunity to practice ways in which they can empower themselves through voice.

Student graduate Emma attests to her own discovery of voice when studying at Clean Break. Emma describes how many of the women come to Clean Break with a story and they end up in disbelief when they realize they are able to use their own voices to tell that story. Emma proudly describes how she originally doubted her ability to write a paper:

... so they even took away the fact that I'd have to do the essay, and write 3,000 words, and I could do a verbal one. It turns out I did a verbal, I did a written, and I did the 3,000 piece in the end. I didn't realize I had so much to say about it. It was absolutely nuts!

The supportive environment at Clean Break helps students to find their own voices, and exceed their own expectations of self.

Theatre becomes a unique way in which the role of voice can be explored and expressed. It can also be used as a means through which women's struggles are expressed that may otherwise go unheard. According to Miranda, theatre can be an

effective means “to give voice to those who don’t usually get to get given it.” She found herself feeling inspired to work at Clean Break after viewing a performance of one of the company’s shows. Balfour (2006b) theorizes that females face social exclusion, are socially regulated, and are disciplined in various ways consistently both inside and outside of prison walls. For Miranda, theatre and women’s voices go hand in hand, and she found that “the very fact that women are in conflict with the law has a lot to do with not being heard, not having a voice, and a fact that this gives them a voice, is very healing, very powerful tool.” Therefore, the role of voice is explored both from the perspective of the students gaining voice, and from audience members who connect and learn of these women’s experiences after viewing their productions.

To expand on the concept of the role of voice in relation to audience members, Sylvia discusses how the shows that Clean Break produces gives voice to women through a large variety of stories. Theatre is a means through which existing politics around crime control can be interrogated and rethought, in accordance with the goals of cultural criminology (Ferrell et al., 2008). Playwrights research into women’s stories, and work to respond to the various struggles of women who are at risk, or are in conflict with the law. For one production, Sylvia describes how the playwright was able to give voice to women’s experiences around topics such as trafficking, deaths in custody, women in the police force, elderly female prison populations, and addiction. To successfully give voice to so many challenging female experiences, Sylvia also articulates how competitive it is to be selected as a playwright in residence at Clean Break. The company seeks out women playwrights with an original voice to tell the stories of other women.

When visiting Clean Break, I also found the role of voice to be very ingrained within the student performances. In viewing the final performances for four different courses, the experiences of the women involved existed within the text itself. The experiences of the students in each course were ingrained within each shows respective text. For the introductory performance course the women presented in a studio space, they each had individual moments to share monologues. Nine students performed to a group of employees and I as we casually sat on the floor of the studio to be audience members. Nerves are high as these newer students negotiate the space as characters in a show. One woman with brown hair to her chin exudes power and confidence as she talks about possessing ownership over her own body. She announced in her monologue: "I spoke to him in the bath. How would he know that I was naked in the bath talking to him over the phone anyway?" Another woman in a full track suit expressed herself through rap. However, her shaking hands are a potential physical manifestation of her nerves performing in front of an audience. She raps about seeking equality regardless of race, and about feeling angry at a report which tries to argue that single moms make criminalized youth. Topics about women's experiences in relation to the penal system are common in these performances and link women to their own voices in a unique method.

The second level performance course is much more polished and formal. Friends and family are invited to view the performance, and programs are on the seats inside the black box theatre space on site. Much like the first level performance, the scenes are written by the female students in the course, of which there were thirteen. The voices that come through during this show talk about women's experiences with

issues such as poverty, social services, drugs, losing jobs, budget cuts, homelessness, family, and motherhood. For this performance the role of voice moves from being a primarily personal experience and exploration, to a more public one in which loved ones are also privy and listening.

Seven students also perform in a course geared toward younger women. The issues discussed in this performance revolved much more around personal identity, dysfunctional families, not fitting in, and concerns around new romantic relationships. The women begin with individual monologues about themselves. One woman, with long, curly black hair takes centre stage and announces: “I like to dance and like happy people. I don’t like evil people.” All of these acting courses place women on stage to use their voice to convey their own experiences. Having voice centre stage, whether it was to a tiny audience, or a much larger one was clearly important to the women performers. Regardless of the performance, I saw various women running around beforehand with high energy and nerves in preparation. Through theatre, these ‘at risk’ and criminalized women were given the opportunity to take the spotlight and explore their own experiences. These scenes bring to the forefront the “meaning and emotion” behind the experiences of criminalized women, which creates an immediate, visceral understanding of cultural transgressions for audiences (Ferrell et al., 2008: 180).

### **Transformation & Growth**

The most prevalent organizational theme and, in turn, a global theme is that of Transformation and Growth. The discussion around this topic is vast and ranges immensely. In relation to the students of Clean Break, there is discussion around their transformative experiences prior to enrollment, the broad changes they have seen from

studying at Clean Break, and an array of specific ways in which they have grown or transformed since becoming a student with the company. Employees contribute the discussion around student experiences with transformation both broadly and more specifically, and they discuss transformative experiences as employees.

To begin this topic, I will look at how transformation and growth play a role in the lives of the students prior to joining Clean Break. For student graduate Emma, experiencing transformation before being a student at Clean Break was a negative, life changing experience. This negative experience revolved around Emma being imprisoned. Park (1950) argues that a person's personality can suddenly change when a dominant mood become that person. This change especially applies when the person has this new mood be the basis for how they conceptualize themselves (Park, 1950), such as newly being a prisoner. Prior to being in contact with the penal system, Emma describes her life very positively. She states: "[I was] living a perfectly normal, active life. No shyness, full of confidence, raising three kids. Do you know what I mean? When I came out of prison, just think of the complete opposite of that." Park (1950) also emphasizes how this change in self can be reinforced by those around them, and larger cultural perspectives and attitudes. Comack (2006a) describes how women, especially criminalized women, have had a history of being the 'Others' who are "referred to as monsters, misfits, and manipulators" (22). Therefore, once out of prison, Emma was still not able to be the vibrant woman she was prior to being criminalized. For past and present students Emma, Amelia, Nicky, and Carry, seeking out change was what instigated them to enroll at Clean Break.

Goffman (1959) argues that it is not uncommon for individuals to, over time, believe that the manufactured reality they present day to day is their actual, complete reality. When convinced of this sole reality, this internalized social discipline leads to social-distantiation, in which individuals feel alienated from their own selves (Goffman, 1959). For criminalized women, I propose that being socially rejected could lead to experiences of social-distantiation where they no longer feel connected to their own selves. When describing their own impetuses for studying at Clean Break, these criminalized women often echo shared experiences of alienation from their own selves and a desire to change. After living as a criminalized women, Nicky describes how she was seeking to transform her life because she was “still not satisfied, not happy, still searching, still wanting something, but not obviously to go back and use drink and drugs”. Gwen, an employee, also describes students’ initial desires for transformation when she states that new students are “very able to articulate what they’re looking, what they need, [and] what change they need in their lives.”

In terms of the broad and vast ways in which transformation of students has been observed, every employee participant describes their own experiences with the topic. Long term employee Gwen describes how staff members aspire to have each student’s time at Clean Break to be “a transformative moment”. She recalls witnessing transformation in students, such as one young woman who initially walked into Clean Break, “and she was just, she kind of had her head...she couldn’t make eye contact.” Gwen argues that transformation is evident when you see the stark contrast of initially meeting a woman such as this, and then later seeing her perform. Employee Holly also explains that she witnesses changes in “the women when they engage with the

program.” Also, newer employee Miranda explains how transformation can occur for women who have come into contact with the penal system, and “it’s beautiful that Clean Break exists to give access basically”.

Student support and success is an important part of the student experience at Clean Break. Several employees quote Clean Break’s statistic that, in Gwen’s words, “about 65-70% of the women who come to study with us will move on to positive outcomes”. Gwen explains how outcomes can be seen daily, and that from the student performances it is apparent that “the women are achieving.” For Sylvia, the transformation from one identity to another by studying at Clean Break is also important. She explains how, when women come to study at Clean Break, “you see people kind of move from one kind of identity, I guess, to another.” For Gwen, the period of time that women study at Clean Break, which is generally a couple of years, is also “quite a good length of time I think for people to make changes that can be sustained.”

A more broad discussion around the topic of transformation occurs with past and present students as well. Student graduates Nicky, Emma, and Amelia all discuss the ways in which a general transformation has occurred in their lives since studying at Clean Break. Emma considers herself able to describe the experiences of transformation for women who come to Clean Break in the following quote:

... We come here broken. It don't matter who we are, what we've done, what has happened to us, we've come here broken, and you can honestly see Clean Break has that plaster, because they give you that tender care. They bandage you until you're able to remove the bandage and that wound can walk free.

Clean Break is seen as giving students the tools needed to figuratively heal whatever wounds exist. Nicky also describes in her own words how Clean Break has helped her to grow as a person. Nicky argues that she was able to turn her life around, and says that the company “gave me something that, yeah, that I hadn't got and I wasn't going to get from anywhere else”. Both Nicky and Emma state that they have transformed in a positive way, and Amelia notes her own transformation when she states that, since finishing Clean Break, she’s a “really different person to who [she] was then.” Emma argues that, regardless of any struggles that someone may experience after graduating Clean Break, “no matter what happens, we can always look back and know that we are definitely in a better place now.” For these women, transformation and growth are a shared experience as student graduates of Clean Break.

Current students also express broad experiences of transformation or growth from their experiences so far at Clean Break. Similar to Frigon’s (2014) dance work, students at Clean Break describe experiencing growing in many different ways through their new relationship with theatre. Jackie describes a holistic experience of growth when she states that she considers herself to be “physically, mentally, and spiritually healthier in every aspect.” Linda also voices her own amazement regarding her experiences at Clean Break when she says: “I am surprised at how much I got out of it so far.” Carry alludes to the potential for growth and transformation when, moving forward from past struggles with addiction, she states: “I feel like I am a little kid now”. Describing oneself to be in an educational setting in a childlike state implies a great deal of room for growth and learning.

Getting into more specific areas of growth and transformation, many of the women discuss ways in which a stronger knowledge of self and identity arises. Arguably, the Clean Break Theatre Company is able to support women by supplying them with useful tools to place in their 'back stage' area, also known as Goffman's (1959) back region. Students are supplied with a more private space to do identity work, and transform individually. Both employees Sylvia and Miranda discuss identity work for students when they come to Clean Break. Sylvia explains how it is important for students to be in a nonjudgmental space "where they can define their own identity". Miranda also argues that creativity allows change and the ability to move beyond identities.

Each student graduate also attributes their stronger knowledge of identity to being at Clean Break. Nicky explains how her original doubts about relating to other students were diminished when she realized: "I fit in with these kind of people, that's kind of like...yeah....I felt comfortable in this kind of arena." For Nicky, her own identity was clearer when working alongside other women who also came from "a lot of trauma and stuff like that". Both Emma and Amelia attest to the fact that they feel as though they are allowed to be who they really are when present at Clean Break. These women feel that they are able to exist as their truest selves when on site.

A couple of current students also discuss how they are working on building a stronger knowledge of self while at Clean Break. For Linda and Carry, a self development course was a markedly positive experience. Carry describes the course as "intense," and explains that it entailed her looking at herself, which motivated her to move on to other courses. For Linda, this course was important because it allowed her

to talk about her issues amongst other women. Both Carry and Linda were able to gain a stronger knowledge of self through a course such as this offered at Clean Break. For Carry, this was an important point of transformation and growth because it has helped her to learn that she is interested in a career in theatre as well. Carry's newfound passion for theatre is not an uncommon revelation for students who come to Clean Break. Employee Gwen discusses identity and theatre, and explains how courses at Clean Break can help students in:

... reducing isolation, feeling more motivated and positive about their futures, having a reshaped sense of identity about who they are going forward and what their potential is and what they can do. And that could be reigniting a kind of passion that they already had in theatre, or it could be a completely new revelation to them.

Transformation can occur for students of Clean Break by having them participate in introspective work to better understand their own selves or identities.

The topics of specific ways in which students experience growth ranges and has been divided into the following three areas: physical transformation, a shift in purpose or focus, and gaining confidence. In terms of physical transformations, Frigon and Shantz (2014) argue that, through dance, "gendered bodily practices" (85) can be explored within the participant's own bodies. At Clean Break, practicing theatre has reconnected these criminalized women to their bodies physically on varying levels as well. Current students Carry, Donna, and Jackie all discuss how they have experienced changes physically so far while studying at Clean Break. In the following quote Carry describes her experiences physically so far: "[I] lost weight, I am more flexible. Can

stretch a bit more. And yeah, just movement in general is just more there.” Donna also argues that she transformed by experiencing “physically just different movements and hearing your body and seeing what your body can do.” Jackie also contributes to this conversation when she argues that she is feeling a new “motivation to come back to fitness”.

The most dominant topic of discussion around growth and transformation for students at Clean Break is based around building confidence. This topic of discussion is popular both for personnel and for students. Employees Miranda, Holly, and Gwen all describe gaining confidence as an important way in which students transform or grow while at Clean Break. Cultural criminology acknowledges the uncertainty commonly felt by individuals because we are situated in a time of ontological insecurity (Ferrell et al., 2008). Clean Break works to combat insecurity by giving students the tools to build a confidence within themselves that helps them to possess a strong sense of self-identity (Ferrell et al., 2008). For Holly, students often go through a “holistic change, and it's obviously a journey. But I think from the first moment of attending a class here you start to see them growing in confidence and their self esteem.” Holly also explains how Clean Break gives students the tools to leave and interact with the world confidently. She argues that students leave not only with a “renewed sense of perspective, but also of confidence of being able to put those things into practice.” While talking about the impact of Clean Break, Miranda and Gwen attest to witnessing such transformations occurring in the students. Gwen argues that even doing one course on site can help students to experience “personal growth and development, and

confidence, and self esteem, and better ability to work in a group and work with others, and more tolerance and acceptance”.

Past and present students also participate in this discussion around growth through gaining confidence while at Clean Break. In a moment of personal reflection, student graduate Amelia considers her own experiences with Clean Break and states that she gained more confidence in herself. Participants describe how practicing theatre work at Clean Break has allowed them to no longer feel as though they are, as Butler (1990) describes, the ‘Other’. These transformative experiences bring these individual women to the forefront of their own lives. Rather than perceiving themselves as “the sex that cannot be thought, a linguistic absence and opacity,” (Butler, 1990: 9) they are reworking their own identities. Nicky articulates her own transformative experience studying at Clean Break when she describes how she was able overcome feelings of rejection and isolation:

I went on to do this second course, and I would say it brought something out of me, and made me feel on a certain level like happy and excited about something again. Being kind of lost and forgotten and buried inside for such a long time, but I didn't have what I've got now in terms of the believability and the confidence, and the passion so much for it. It was just...and I remember pinching myself in class, you know, certain things we was doing and I've never, like, kind of like, having teas and thinking: ‘Wow. Wow. I am so pleased that this hasn't passed me by.’

This personal story is not dissimilar to the stories of the current students interviewed at Clean Break. Many express how they felt uncertain and have worked on, or are currently working on their confidence in themselves.

Current students Donna, Linda, Carry, and Rose all engage in this conversation topic while sitting outside in the sun smoking, drinking coffee, and eating lunch together. Carry describes how, when she first started at Clean Break, it took her “about three weeks even to say things”. She explains how she is now experiencing a ‘personal breakthrough’ because she states that she is now “more confident, and as a child I was never very confident”. When Carry’s class did their final performance for their dance class in the previous week a camera was brought into the space for archiving purposes. Carry argues that a year ago she would not have participated in a performance with an audience and camera.

Older student Linda contributes to this discussion when she states how common it is for students at Clean Break to lack confidence at first, and how she has noticed transformation of fellow students in her own classes. Linda explains her own observations when she states: “bit by bit they would sort of, almost blossom, you know. [...] You see them looking much happier and you can see the change that people are going through and it’s really nice.” Both Donna and Linda describe how they have struggled with personal confidence because they, in Donna’s words, “worry too much about what people think”. Clean Break helps these women to shed these fears and be more confident in their everyday lives. Rose also explains how she used to be debilitated by her lack of confidence when she says: “I never used to give it a go, you know? I thought: ‘Oh no, that’s going to be too hard. I can’t do it.’” Now, at Clean Break,

Rose is taking multiple courses and is trying new things. Donna is also working on her confidence and considers her personal growth while at Clean Break as a work in progress.

Staff member Miranda and Clean Break actor Amelia also discuss ways in which they have experienced growth or transformation in relation to their own current roles within the company. Amelia explains how the project that she is a part of “is about trying to give perception and insight into how people get, with addiction particularly, but criminal justice as well.” For Amelia, the workshops that she is involved in within the community are a way in which she observes transformation of others. She describes her own observations, and states that you can “see them change, and we see them very directly influence how they think, and if they're making policies locally or nationally it's...even if we affect one person it feels like that's a really positive step.”

### **Challenges, Limitations, & Barriers**

**External challenges.** The discussion around external challenges predominantly focuses on the different barriers that the students of Clean Break experience personally in their lives. This discussion of external challenges ties in with Butler’s (1990) theory around identity construction. She argues that identities are shaped by political motives, and are the result of various “institutions, practices [and] discourses” (Butler, 1990: ix). It is through external infrastructures that individuals are shaped and come to understand themselves (Weedon, 1987). Both employees and students at Clean Break recognize and describe hurdles in relation to various, challenging external structures. Ferrell et al. (2008) argue that power dynamics in society are fed by deep rooted inequalities.

Personnel at Clean Break describe changes to the political climate that negatively impact external support services for their students. In the following quotation, Holly articulates a common concern around the external challenges the woman participants must face:

... my negative experiences are really about gaining a greater knowledge of the unfairness of the criminal justice system, and of the women's lives, which are incredibly challenging, and are increasingly so because of the cuts that are being made to welfare, and housing, and things in the UK at the moment. So, their lives are getting harder and harder, and the support available of them is getting smaller and smaller. So that is kind of...that is a very negative, and sometimes a very hard thing to keep on coming up against.

Holly considers the current political climate to be increasingly challenging for women through cuts to welfare and housing. This lack of social support places a lot of demand on current community providers, such as Clean Break, to help women overcome the various struggles in their daily lives.

Employees argue that getting proper help and support is an ongoing battle for criminalized women. Goffman (1959) theorises that individuals conduct themselves depending on their social status. If an individual tries to break free from their constructed identity audiences will prevent that individual from changing (Goffman, 1959). This resistance to change is apparent in the external challenges that are discussed by members of Clean Break. Gwen also acknowledges how difficult it is for women with low income to get the help they need. She states that:

It's challenging because, especially, there are changes in the climate. People have to be in certain boroughs, live in certain areas to access certain funding, to be able to receive some of the services. And there are waiting lists for counseling, and there's housing shortages. There aren't straight forward answers that service providers are able to meet. There are gaps, and so we're not able to fill those gaps.

Gwen discusses how Clean Break is unable to aid participants with all of the external struggles that they may have to face because the issues are so vast and extensive. Goffman (1959) explains how the treatment of individuals depends on the social characteristics they possess. Therefore, to maintain a respectable self image, individuals need access to structural resources (Branaman, 1997), such as these being discussed by Clean Break employees.

The importance of a community-based support network arises around this discussion, because it is not possible for one place to help women face all of the challenges they may be experiencing day to day. Criminalized women are often viewed as individuals who are doing their gender 'wrong' (Worrall, 1990), and Butler (1999) argues that when an individual does fail to perform their gender the results can be punitive. The extensive punishments that criminalized women must endure, including after a sentence may be served, further enforces the perceived credibility of traditional gender constructs (Butler, 1999). Another employee, Sylvia, contributes to this discussion when she describes barriers that criminalized women must face once back in the community:

... Because of the environment, things are really dire here, and the support for women, and things like housing, and benefits and legal aid, and the financial cuts. You know, they're all really impacting a lot, so making sure that we can meet the demands, but also point them in the direction of other organizations that can also support them is really, really important.

Both meeting the demands placed on the company because of these external challenges, as well as creating relationships with outside organizations are considered important to Sylvia. The support offered by Clean Break to participants is framed by employees as an area of support that may be needed, among other resources in the community, as part of a more holistic community support network. By continually working to provide support, this theatre company resists accepting the extensive punitive ramifications given to those who counter cultural gender constructions.

Although the discussions around the external challenges in the lives of Clean Break participants are depicted as dire, the fighting spirit of both personnel and students emerges. Weedon (1987) describes how individuals can either follow in line with or resist existing power relations, and the women at Clean Break exemplify a pocket of resistance. Rose, a current student at Clean Break, says that: "Yeah, it's the government really. They're trying to knock all up on the head now ain't they? But yeah, we're just going to keep fighting from them doing that." For Rose, a homeless student who makes sure she makes it to all of her courses at Clean Break, hope still exists when confronted by external challenges. There is also a sense of community in this figurative battle, as Rose identifies herself as part of a group (the 'we') that will continue to fight against the government. Long-term employee Sylvia also possesses a hopeful attitude

towards the external challenges experienced by the women involved with Clean Break. Sylvia argues that, since she started working with the company, some of the challenges “are more acute at the moment because of the political leadership here. But I don’t think...I actually don’t think any of those challenges are insurmountable.” Both participants and personnel at Clean Break voice a sense of ability and hope around the topic of external challenges.

Holly discusses Clean Break as being a place through which external challenges for the women participants can be better tackled. As an employee, she expresses how she is motivated to continue her work with Clean Break because of her observations around students being able to better face challenges in their lives after studying on site. Through coursework, Holly sees the students as being better able to deal with the challenges that may arise in their lives. She also argues that Clean Break works to give strong student support so that external challenges do not prevent them from doing courses there. Holly discusses how personnel work to overcome barriers that prevent students from being present in the following quote:

I think the barriers that the women face ... are in their kind of external lives and it's about us trying to make sure we give them the support they need to kind of meet those challenges so they can continue to come and study with us.

By providing student support for external challenges, rates of students dropping out are potentially reduced.

**Personal challenges.** Personal Challenges is the most prevalent organizing theme in terms of emerging quotes about challenges, limitations, and barriers. Both past and present students discuss various challenges in relation to their own personal

issues and struggles. Six of the eight Clean Break students talk about how their own personal challenges prior to joining the company have affected them. Nicky, Carry, and Linda address how their experiences with addiction in the past has created certain barriers in their lives. For Nicky, her experiences with addiction meant that arts opportunities were lost prior to joining Clean Break. Sitting in a chair wearing ripped jeans and a white tank top, Nicky comfortably states that:

I'd always done drama as a kid, and things like that ... so through addiction I've just felt robbed on another layer, really, that I'd never ever got the chance to do what I've always wanted to do.

At this point in time Nicky is both a student graduate and actor for Clean Break, and both of these opportunities were not available to her when she was struggling with addiction. A current student, Carry, also describes how addiction negatively impacted her life. In the following quote, Carry describes how she felt limited when she first came to Clean Break because of her own struggles with addiction. She states: "I was just coming out of addiction, so I mean, so it's very...I was in a very fragile state." These participants' histories proved to be major challenges prior to, and when joining Clean Break.

Issues with mental health and depression are also addressed by many participants. In relation to identity work, Goffman (1959) explains that individuals are not meant to have emotional variables or varying impulses in front of others, or else their social positioning may be threatened. Displaying extreme emotions to others can be considered 'too human,' and so it is imperative that these displays are forgone in order to maintain a coherent social standing (Goffman, 1959). Likely struggling for a

stable social standing, each of the three student graduates bring up their own backgrounds with mental health problems and/or depression. On top of her addiction issues, Nicky says that she definitely came to Clean Break depressed. Emma also shares her own struggles with depression in relation to her life after being in prison. Before coming to Clean Break, she describes herself as dealing with the following challenges: “I was frightened, I was paranoid, I was anxious, nervous, do you know what I mean? It was like my life outside of prison was like bad, you know?” Emma’s role as caretaker of her children had to be reversed once out of prison, and her children had to take care of Emma because she was depressed. Problems around mental health and addiction are also discussed by Emma regarding a friend who was not able to overcome these issues. Discussing the death of a close friend, Emma illustrates how destructive personal challenges such as these can be.

Another common struggle for students pertains to their self confidence when they started studying at Clean Break. Employee Sylvia describes how “when [new students] first walk through the door there is going to be less confidence than hopefully when they walk out the door.” The vast majority of students interviewed brought up their own struggles with confidence and how that was very challenging when starting at Clean Break. For students Rose, Linda, Nicky, and Donna, self doubt was a shared feeling at first. One of the older participants, Linda, says that she possessed the mentality that, like past challenging experiences in her life, she was “probably going to screw this one up too.” Her lack of confidence was a personal barrier that needed to be overcome so that she could be motivated enough to go to Clean Break week to week.

Many of these women describe the fear and self doubt they had when starting at Clean Break. According to Goffman (1959), people interacting with an individual expect that individual to be consistent with their “setting, appearance, and manner” (25). If criminalized women are considered deviant individuals (Worrall, 1990; Balfour & Comack, 2006), then this lack of confidence has potentially emerged from forms of social persecution. At Clean Break many students pinpoint different ways in which they originally feared being judged by others. Emma attributes her lack of confidence partially to the recent weight gain she had experienced from her time in jail and subsequent depression. Whereas current students Linda and Donna discuss how they had feared having their actions judged while at Clean Break. In the following quote, Linda articulates a common fear that students feel limited by: “You’re afraid to look stupid kind of thing, you’re afraid to play around and be silly, and it’s kind of a side of yourself that you need to develop.”

This state of vulnerability also manifests for students through issues around trust as well. Linda states that when she first started at Clean Break she thought to herself: “Oh, I won’t be able to trust anyone here because they’re all criminals.” Here the media has potentially shaped meaning around crime and criminality so effectively through cultural reproductions that a criminalized woman cannot feel as though she is even able to trust other criminalized individuals, that perhaps she is even an exception to what the media depicts (Ferrell et al., 2008). For some students at Clean Break, trust issues stemmed from prejudice against those labelled ‘criminal’, while for others past experiences with people negatively influenced their future ability to trust others. In the following quote, Donna admits to protecting herself by putting up a wall to prevent

other people from getting too close. She states: “You put your trust in people, you think they’re your friends and they’re not your friends, and they kick you in the face, knock you down”. Jackie relates to Donna’s trust issues, and tells her own story. Comfortable in the Clean Break environment, Jackie is able to laugh when she describes how she was shut down to other women in her past. Trusting women was such a struggle for Jackie before studying at Clean Break that, at her previous treatment centre, she was called ‘Ice Woman’. Hearing this nickname is shocking because, as she states this, I have in front of me a confident, passionate, talkative woman who chose to place her trust in me and elect to be interviewed.

Multiple other individual barriers were mentioned throughout the interview process as well. Participants’ struggles range and include challenges such as: being homeless, not being able to afford food, grieving the loss of a loved one, healing from surgery, unsuccessful educational backgrounds, and being disillusioned about potential future opportunities. However, several students also attest to how Clean Break is the stable, positive outlet in their sea of challenges. For example, after a major operation, Jackie says: “I was struggling when I left the treatment centre, and I was looking forward, A) to have this, B) to have support, and C) something to get up to in the morning.” Clean Break provided a means through which Jackie could combat the multitude of challenges in her life, and give her new focus.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### Revisiting Findings

Page after page of this thesis has been spent working to address the following research question: “How do theatre initiatives help to explore the individual and collective experiences of criminalized women, and what impact can these initiatives have on their lives?” Conducting a case study at Clean Break has aided me in delving into this interdisciplinary project, which explores arts practices within the field of criminology. Aspects of each chapter joined together within the previous data analysis section to holistically engage with the dominantly emerging themes. The following is a focused retelling of my findings within this thesis.

To address the first part of my research question, theatre initiatives play a role in engaging with the individual and collective experiences of criminalized women. In the global themes of both *The Role of the Arts, the Environment, & Voice* and *Challenges, Limitations, and Barriers*, a multitude of experiences are discussed and engaged with. To begin with, the first global theme, in the subtheme of ‘Role of Theatre and the Arts,’ participants explain how theatre is important in that it both is a lens into the experiences of criminalized women, as well as in being used as a tool for change. This discussion is engaged with further in relation to theorists such as Ferrell et al. (2008), who identify a need for a lens on the lived experiences, and therefore more human experiences of crime. Theatre offers that humanizing experience to both audience members and, at times, to the participants themselves.

Organizing themes of ‘Environment at Clean Break,’ and ‘Role of Voice’ also address important aspects of the experiences of criminalized women. Participants

articulate the importance of a women-only environment on site to rebuild trust and feel supported while practicing theatre. A unique relationship also exists between the experiences of criminalized women and theatre in that participants identify gaining a voice through such work. Butler's (2011) work on performativity relates to verbal representations of self, and I argue that Clean Break offers an avenue of resistance for participants. Themes of empowerment and ownership over voice emerge from the data as experiences that criminalized women gain from practicing theatre.

In the global theme of *Challenges, Limitations, and Barriers*, organizing themes exist which explore both external and personal challenges for criminalized women as well. Within 'External Challenges,' participants articulate barriers that women at risk or in conflict with the law must overcome in their daily lives. Both Butler's (1990) and Goffman's (1959) work around identity construction and resistance are applied to more aptly contextualize these women's external struggles. Within the organizing theme of 'Personal Challenges,' the experiences of criminalized women in this case study are described. Participants share various stories, which include instances such as overcoming personal challenges by (re)engaging with theatre practices, overcoming a history of feeling vulnerable, and subjugating the impulse to not trust others while at the theatre company.

The themes discussed so far feed into the second part of my research question, and the dominant theme of *Transformation and Growth* further addresses the various impacts that arts initiatives can have on these women's lives. This global theme is so dominant that it also stands alone as its own organizing theme. Goffman's (1959) theory of social-distantiation supports how criminalized women may have experienced

feelings of alienation in relation to being in conflict with the law. Within this theme there are discussions of broad ways in which employees, student graduates, and current students have observed or experienced transformation or growth. Specific transformative experiences include gaining a stronger knowledge of self and identity, as well as building self confidence. These criminalized women experience personal growth in a variety of ways, and attribute such growth to the work they do at Clean Break.

Therefore, to broadly address the research question posed, theatre initiatives help us to better engage with and viscerally understand more cohesively the experiences of criminalized women, and these initiatives allow for a multitude of ways in which personal transformation may occur. To conduct a study on the effects of theatre initiatives for criminalized women, I had to fly to another continent to gather data. At the heart of this thesis work is the link between theatre initiatives and the needs of criminalized women in Canada.

### **Practical Contributions: The Canadian Context**

To revisit the problem to be examined within this thesis, both the need for further therapeutic interventions, and the lack of theatre initiatives for criminalized women in Canada are what spurred on this exploratory project. The lack of legitimate research in this field also required me to conduct a rigorous and ethically sound case study to gain more knowledge and contribute to a growing area of research. I conducted this case study as a concerned, feminist researcher who is seeking potential alternative initiatives for criminalized women here in Canada. Applying these findings in a Canadian context would be the next step in engaging with criminalized women by

using theatre as lens in which we can better understand their own experiences, and as a tool for growth and change in their own lives.

Theatre initiatives could play a pivotal role in Canada, and contribute to the overall goal of prevention, as proposed by the TFFSW's report *Creating Choices*. By offering women 'at risk' or in conflict with the law support through the unique forum of theatre, perhaps the experiences of transformation and growth seen within this data analysis could translate to the Canadian context. Experiences of empowerment through gaining trust, confidence, and identity could be powerful tools for women to gain who are being criminalized. For an organization to thrive as Clean Break does in the England, it would be imperative for it to function completely outside of the Correctional Service of Canada. Having a theatre company operate independently from the CSC is also important to ensure the focus remains on the well-being of the criminalized women involved, and that cooptation by the CSC is avoided at all costs. An independent theatre company could start helping women to reverse the damage experienced from being criminalized, and I suspect a prison environment is not the ideal place for work like this to be done. The role of the environment at Clean Break was largely discussed by students, and this emergent theme indicates that a company such as this needs to function independently and outside of prison walls.

### **Theoretical Contributions: Theatre & Criminology**

This thesis can be linked back to Frigon's (2014) proposal that arts work can translate into criminological propositions, and this theory work plays an important role in the creation of this thesis project. Also, Butler (1990) argues that we live in a culture concerned with males and, in turn, women are the absent, other sex. By merging

Butler's (1990) feminist lens with Frigon's (2014) interdisciplinary proposals, I argue that theatre work can be very important in bringing women to the forefront culturally and criminologically. Simply conducting a case study taught me a great deal about the particular needs and struggles of the criminalized women involved in the project.

Theatre practices can be a method in which we are better criminologically informed about the experiences of these women in Canada. Both understanding criminalized women and engaging with them can be transformed by introducing a multidisciplinary approach through the merging of theatre and criminology. This also could hold true to those engaged with the topic, such as practitioners and academics. Theatre practices can modernize criminological practices by creating a shared, human experience through the dynamic element of performance. It could also incite questions within ourselves regarding how we engage with this population and this visceral response could surpass whatever effects reading about a tertiary experience on page can do.

### **Closing Remarks**

This exploratory thesis figuratively opens doors into the experiences of criminalized women and what role theatre can play in their lives. I conducted a case study to participate within and contribute to this newly growing field of arts practices in relation to criminology. Theatre practices for criminalized women can be a very timely way in which to engage with, better understand, and support the world's largest growing prison population. There is a need to leave this project not with my own conclusions and musings, but with the direct words of the women so generous to offer themselves to this research:

*I am surprised at how much I got out of [studying at Clean Break] so far, and I hope to do more here. And theatre in particular, it's, you know, we all work together on something, and it's great. And the least...the people who are quiet and don't say much for a few weeks, and especially I noticed in the first few weeks there were people that kept their hat on, and kept all like hunched up and didn't take their coat off in these sessions. And didn't really wanna join in or share, and **bit by bit they would sort of, almost blossom**, you know. You would see them without the hat. You see them looking much happier, and you can see the change that people are going through and it's really nice. – Linda (a current student at Clean Break)*



*An outdoor seating area for the women on site.*

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## Appendix A Recruitment Text

**Title of the study:** Thwarting Her Erosion: An Exploration into the Experiences of Women in Conflict with the Law, and the Role of Prison Theatre Initiatives in Their Lives.

**Principal Investigator:** Elise Merrill  
M.A. Candidate  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, ON  
[REDACTED]

**Supervisor:** Dr. Sylvie Frigon  
Full Professor  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, ON  
[REDACTED]

### **Invitation to Participate:**

You are invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Elise Merrill, and her supervisor Dr. Sylvie Frigon. This project is funded in part by the University of Ottawa's Faculty Research Chair, *The Prison in Culture, Culture in Prison*, as well as by The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' research travel grant through the University of Ottawa.

### **Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of the study is to learn how prison theatre practices help to explore the personal and group experiences of women who are in conflict with the law. The aim of this study is to discover how prison theatre practices can help society better understand women who are in conflict with the law, and to see how these practices can impact the women who participate in them.

The goals of this study include the following:

- A) To learn how, through prison theatre practices, these women feel emotionally and mentally once they have become in conflict with the law.
- B) To explore how prison theatre work can help society understand how women who become in conflict with the law are affected socially (their relationships with friends, family, loved ones, and so on).
- C) To see how theatre work for women in conflict with the law helps society understand how these women feel in their bodies, and use their bodies (For example: Do they feel healthy, or unhealthy?).
- D) To discover how prison theatre initiatives impact, or influence, women participants who are in conflict with the law.

### **Participation:**

If you are being interviewed, your participation will consist essentially of attending one interview that will last approximately one hour, during which a series of questions will be asked about your own experiences and life. Please note that all interviews will be audio recorded.

### **Risks:**

If interviewed, your participation in this study will potentially entail you volunteering very personal information, and this may cause you to feel upset emotionally, uncomfortable, or regret disclosing details about your life.

I want to assure you that every effort will be made to minimize these risks through the guaranteed anonymity of any personal information. All personal information will be made anonymous, and any identifying features (such as approximate height, weight, hair colour, etc.) will be removed to protect the identities of those involved. Fake names (pseudonyms) will also be used within the transcripts.

**Benefits:**

Your participation in this study will help others in society to better understand some of the experiences of women in conflict with the law. By being observed you are also helping to have more information be produced about what role prison theatre initiatives can have for women in conflict with the law.

If interviewed, your participation in this study will give you an opportunity to talk about personal experiences, struggles, and/or injustices that you may have faced from becoming in conflict with the law, or have observed of other women in conflict with the law. This project provides an opportunity for women in conflict with the law to have a voice, and to describe their own experiences with prison theatre practices.

Also, by participating in this research project you are potentially motivating and justifying the creation of prison theatre practices for women in conflict with the law in Canada. Currently more information is needed to understand how theatre work can help women in conflict with the law, and by sharing your own experiences you can help society to better understand what challenges women in conflict with the law have gone through.

**Confidentiality and anonymity:**

As the principle investigator, I want to assure you that the information you will share while being interviewed will remain strictly **confidential**. Only the principle investigator and supervisor will handle these observation notes and information. Any of your information stored on a computer will be password protected, and any physical copies of your information will be kept in a safe and locked space.

**Anonymity** will be protected through the removal of any identifying features from the transcripts, including your name, work position, or other specific identifiers. Please be aware that only the principle investigator and supervisor will have access to the data collected throughout this research project.

**Voluntary Participation:**

You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be removed upon personal request.

Please note: to participate in this study, you will be required to read and sign a consent form (of which you will be given a copy).

Appendix B  
i) Interview Consent Form - Participants

**Title of the study:** Thwarting Her Erosion: An Exploration into the Experiences of Women in Conflict with the Law, and the Role of Prison Theatre Initiatives in Their Lives.

**Principal Investigator:** Elise Merrill  
M.A. Candidate  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, ON  
[REDACTED]

**Supervisor:** Dr. Sylvie Frigon  
Full Professor  
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University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, ON  
[REDACTED]

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I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Elise Merrill, and her supervisor Dr. Sylvie Frigon. This project is funded in part by the University of Ottawa's Faculty Research Chair, *The Prison in Culture, Culture in Prison*, as well as by The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' research travel grant through the University of Ottawa.

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The purpose of the study is to learn how prison theatre practices help to explore the personal and group experiences of women who are in conflict with the law. The aim of this study is to discover how prison theatre practices can help society better understand women who are in conflict with the law, and to see how these practices can impact the women who participate in them.

The goals of this study include the following:

- A) To learn how, through prison theatre practices, these women feel emotionally and mentally once they have become in conflict with the law.
- B) To explore how prison theatre work can help society understand how women who become in conflict with the law are affected socially (their relationships with friends, family, loved ones, and so on).
- C) To see how theatre work for women in conflict with the law helps society understand how these women feel in their bodies, and use their bodies (For example: Do they feel healthy, or unhealthy?).
- D) To discover how prison theatre initiatives impact, or influence, women participants who are in conflict with the law.

**Participation:**

My participation will consist essentially of attending one interview that will last approximately one hour, during which a series of questions will be asked about my own experiences and life. This interview has been scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_. I am aware that all interviews will be audio recorded.

**Risks:**

My participation in this study will potentially entail me volunteering very personal information, and this may cause me to feel upset emotionally, uncomfortable, or regret disclosing details about my life. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks through the guaranteed anonymity of the personal information that I provide. All personal responses and information will be made anonymous, and any identifying features (such as approximate height, weight, hair colour, etc.) will be removed to protect my identity. Fake names (pseudonyms) will also be used within the transcripts.

Also, at any time after the interview, I can personally contact the researcher through e-mail or telephone to request a copy of the interview in writing to review. Any information that you no longer wish to be included in the research project will be removed upon your request. Once the interviewer is out of the country, any copies of the typed out interview will be sent through registered mail to make sure your information remains private. However, it is important to know that no form of mail delivery can entirely guarantee confidentiality, and so this form of delivery does have an element of risk to my privacy.

The following is a compiled list of local resources for me to contact if I experience psychological or emotional discomfort from the interview process.

For immediate support participants can call:

Samaritans 24 Hour Helpline at 0845 790 9090.

Sane's Mental Health Helpline at 0845 767 8000.

NOTE: While no emergency hotline in the UK is entirely free of charge, prices range depending on type of phone line used, as well as by the phone provider.

For longer term support participants can call:

London West End Counselling Service at 020 8123 6710. 25 Floral Street, Covent Garden, London. (reduced pricing, or potentially free counselling services)

The Caravan Drop-In & Counselling Service at 020 7900 3316. St. James's Church, 197 Piccadilly, London. (free counselling services)

Women's Consortium Counselling Service at +44 (0) 7814 960 713. 10a Montagu Road, Hendon. (reduced pricing counselling services)

**Benefits:**

My participation in this study will give me an opportunity to talk about personal experiences, struggles, and/or injustices that I may have faced from becoming in conflict with the law. This project provides an opportunity for women in conflict with the law to have a voice, and to describe their own experiences with prison theatre practices.

By participating in this research project I am also potentially motivating and justifying the creation of prison theatre practices for women in conflict with the law in Canada. Currently more information is needed to understand how theatre work can help women in conflict with the law and, by sharing my own experiences, I can help society to better understand what challenges women in conflict with the law have gone through.

**Confidentiality and anonymity:**

I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly **confidential**. I understand that the contents will be used only by the principle investigator and supervisor, and that my confidentiality will be protected, because only the principle investigator and supervisor will handle my interviews and information. Any of my information stored on a computer

will be password protected, and any physical copies of my information will be kept in a safe and locked space.

**Anonymity** will be protected through the removal of any identifying features, including my name. All interviews are held in a private room, and the identity of who has participated in an interview will at no point be known to anyone outside of the principle investigator and supervisor.

**Conservation of data:**

The data collected, audio recordings of interviews, written notes, consent forms, transcripts, and a flash drive back up copy, will be kept in a secure manner to protect your privacy.

While the thesis is being written, all electronic data will be kept on one password-protected computer. All hard copies of transcripts and any other data collected will be stored in a locking filing cabinet in the principal investigator's home. An electronic copy of the data will be kept in the form of a flash drive in a locked cabinet in the thesis supervisor's office.

All data will be conserved for five years following the completion of the project. At that point in time all types of data will be shredded, and deleted.

**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, the principle research will then ask me if I would like my data removed from the study. At that point in time, if I so choose, all data gathered up until the time of withdrawal will be removed upon personal request. I am also aware that my choice to participate, or not participate in this study, will not effect in any way my involvement with Clean Break.

**Acceptance:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Elise Merrill of the Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences, at the University of Ottawa, which research 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 questions regarding 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 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5 Tel.: (613) 562-5387 Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

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

Participant's signature:

Date:

Researcher's signature:

Date:

*If any research participant is unable to read or comprehend the information in this written consent form, the form can be verbally explained and the necessary consent can be obtained orally. The participant's verbal consent will be documented at the beginning of the audio tape, which records the interview.*

## ii) Interview Consent Form – Personnel

**Title of the study:** **Thwarting Her Erosion: An Exploration into the Experiences of Women in Conflict with the Law, and the Role of Prison Theatre Initiatives in Their Lives.**

**Principal Investigator:** Elise Merrill  
M.A. Candidate  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, ON  
[REDACTED]

**Supervisor:** Dr. Sylvie Frigon  
Full Professor  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, ON  
[REDACTED]

### **Invitation to Participate:**

I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Elise Merrill, and her supervisor Dr. Sylvie Frigon. This project is funded in part by the University of Ottawa's Faculty Research Chair, *The Prison in Culture, Culture in Prison*, as well as by The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' research travel grant through the University of Ottawa.

### **Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of the study is to learn how prison theatre practices help to explore the personal and group experiences of women who are in conflict with the law. The aim of this study is to discover how prison theatre practices can help society better understand women who are in conflict with the law, and to see how these practices can impact the women who participate in them.

The goals of this study include the following:

- A) To learn how, through prison theatre practices, these women feel emotionally and mentally once they have become in conflict with the law.
- B) To explore how prison theatre work can help society understand how women who become in conflict with the law are affected socially (their relationships with friends, family, loved ones, and so on).
- C) To see how theatre work for women in conflict with the law helps society understand how these women feel in their bodies, and use their bodies (For example: Do they feel healthy, or unhealthy?).
- D) To discover how prison theatre initiatives impact, or influence, women participants who are in conflict with the law.

### **Participation:**

My participation will consist essentially of attending one interview that will last approximately one hour, during which a series of questions will be asked about my own experiences and life in relation to working with women in conflict with the law. This interview has been scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_. I am aware that all interviews will be audio recorded.

### **Risks:**

My participation in this study will potentially entail me volunteering very personal information, and this may cause me to feel upset emotionally, uncomfortable, or regret disclosing details about my life. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks through the guaranteed anonymity of the personal information that I provide. All personal responses and information will be made anonymous, and any identifying features (such as approximate height, weight, hair colour, etc.) will be removed to protect my identity. Fake names (pseudonyms) will also be used within the transcripts.

Also, at any time after the interview, you can personally contact the researcher through e-mail or telephone to request a copy of the interview in writing to review. Any information that you no longer wish to be included in the research project will be removed upon your request.

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The Caravan Drop-In & Counselling Service at 020 7900 3316. St. James's Church, 197 Piccadilly, London. (free counselling services)

Women's Consortium Counselling Service at +44 (0) 7814 960 713. 10a Montagu Road, Hendon. (reduced pricing counselling services)

### **Benefits:**

My participation in this study will give me an opportunity to talk about personal experiences, struggles, and/or injustices that I may have observed of women in conflict with the law. This project provides an opportunity for women in conflict with the law to have a voice, and it allows their own experiences with theatre initiatives to be explored and perhaps better understood.

By participating in this research project I am also potentially motivating and justifying the creation of prison theatre practices for women in conflict with the law in Canada. Currently more information is needed to understand how theatre work can help women in conflict with the law and, by sharing my own experiences in this field, I can help society to better understand what challenges women in conflict with the law have gone through.

### **Confidentiality and anonymity:**

I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly **confidential**. I understand that the contents will be used only by the principle investigator and supervisor, and that my confidentiality will be protected, because only the principle investigator and supervisor will handle my interviews and information. Any of my information stored on a computer will be password protected, and any physical copies of my information will be kept in a safe and locked space.

**Anonymity** will be protected through the removal of any identifying features, including my name. All interviews are held in a private room, and the identity of who has participated in an interview will at no point be known to anyone outside of the principle investigator and supervisor.

**Conservation of data:**

The data collected, audio recordings of interviews, written notes, consent forms, transcripts, and a flash drive back up copy, will be kept in a secure manner to protect your privacy.

While the thesis is being written, all electronic data will be kept on one password-protected computer. All hard copies of transcripts and any other data collected will be stored in a locking filing cabinet in the principal investigator's home. An electronic copy of the data will be kept in the form of a flash drive in a locked cabinet in the thesis supervisor's office.

All data will be conserved for five years following the completion of the project. At that point in time all types of data will be shredded, and deleted.

**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, the principle research will then ask me if I would like my data removed from the study. At that point in time, if I so choose, all data gathered up until the time of withdrawal will be removed upon personal request. I am also aware that my choice to participate, or not participate in this study, will not effect in any way my position at Clean Break.

**Acceptance:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Elise Merrill of the Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences, at the University of Ottawa, which research is under the supervision of Dr. Sylvie Frigon.

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Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street,

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

Participant's signature:

Date:

Researcher's signature:

Date:

---

*If any research participant is unable to read or comprehend the information in this written consent form, the form can be verbally explained and the necessary consent can be obtained orally. The participant's verbal consent will be documented at the beginning of the audio tape, which records the interview.*

## Appendix C

### Interview Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews

I will be asking questions from the following two question guides. All questions may not be asked within every interview, and the order of the questions may vary depending on the responses given.

#### ***For Participants (women in conflict with the law):***

- Before participating with the company, what did you think of Clean Break when you first heard about it? Has this changed since you became involved with Clean Break?
- What motivated you to participate in Clean Break?
- How many times have you participated in activities at/through Clean Break? Which activities in particular?
- How do you feel when you come to Clean Break to participate in something (workshops, rehearsals, courses, etc.)?
- Would you describe your experiences with Clean Break to be particularly positive or negative?
- Tell me about the experiences you have had so far with the theatre initiatives that Clean Break offers.
- Tell me about the experiences you have had working with other women at Clean Break so far (other participants, as well as personnel).
- Have you noticed any differences in how you feel or think from before you started working with Clean Break up until now?
- Has Clean Break influenced any aspects of your life so far? Which?
- Since working with Clean Break, has your relationship with your mental health changed in any way?
- Since working with Clean Break, has your relationship with your physical health changed in any way?
- What do you plan to do when you finish your courses through Clean Break?

#### ***For Personnel:***

- What motivated you to work at Clean Break?
- How long have you worked here for? What role do you serve at this company?
- Would you describe your experiences with Clean Break to be particularly positive or negative?
- Tell me about the experiences you have had working with other women at Clean Break so far (the participants, as well as other personnel).
- Tell me about the attitudes of, and your experiences with, new women participants? Have you noticed any changes in attitude over time?
- Can you describe any observations you may have regarding how the women participants function socially? Does this change over time?
- What impact, if any, do you believe prison theatre initiatives have on women in conflict with the law?
- What are some of the primary challenges to running prison theatre initiatives? How do you work to overcome them?
- Do you know how long women generally participate here for?
- What are your experiences with women 'finishing' courses/workshops here? Do you know what they do when they're 'done'?

#### ***Additional Themes/Topics I will be pulling from during the interviews:***

- Social life and relationships – family/ friends/ loved ones
- Relationship with self-confidence, self-respect, and/or empowerment
- Foresight and future planning
- Aspects of physical and mental health
- Trust, caring, sharing

## Appendix D

### Observation Grid

With this case study it is challenging to know for certain what type of activities at Clean Break I will have the opportunity to observe. I could potentially be observing workshops, courses, meetings, group discussions, intake assessments, rehearsals, or other opportunities through Clean Break. Therefore, currently my observation guidelines must remain speculative until more information is obtained, and it potentially may have to wait to be developed until I get there.

The following section is laid out with the assumption that I will be observing scenarios where at least one employee or volunteer from Clean Break is directing participants in some way (through an activity, workshop, etc.).

Through body language, body placement, and verbal cues, I plan to be observing the following elements currently:

- How participants relate to other individuals in the room – this includes personnel, other participants, and perhaps even to myself as a physically present observer.
- The various vocal techniques used for communication (between, among, and to participants and personnel).
- The sense of ‘respect’ of the space being used. (i.e.: Is it clean before and after use? How do individuals respect the space while they are in it?)
- Compliance to rules set out during the activity. (i.e.: Do both the personnel and the participants create/ follow any rules set out during this time? Do rules change often?)
- Motivational techniques. (i.e. Are there any practices that are observed that motivate participants to contribute? Are participants enthusiastic, or disengaged from the activities?)
- Challenges within the work being done. (i.e. Are there any major roadblocks in the activity set out? How are challenges dealt with by participants?)
- Any sources of support and/or strength. (i.e. Do these women work individually, or as a group? Do they motivate each other to work, or deter others from contributing in any way?)
- The level engagement in the room with activities. (i.e. Do the women in the room appear interested in what is happening? Are they taking risks by trying new things/ overcoming challenging exercises that are set out in the activities?)
- Potential changes throughout my visit with particular individuals being observed. (i.e. Do they appear more or less comfortable over time? Do they isolate themselves, or interact with other women over time?)

## Appendix E

File Number: 04-13-23

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/03/2013



**Université d'Ottawa** **University of Ottawa**  
 Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

**Ethics Approval Notice****Social Science and Humanities REB****Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)**

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Sylvie	Frigon	Social Sciences / Criminology	Supervisor
Elise	Merrill	Social Sciences / Criminology	Student Researcher

**File Number:** 04-13-23**Type of Project:** Master's Thesis**Title:** Thwarting Her Erosion: An Exploration into the Experiences of Women in CONflict with the Law, and the Role of Prison Theatre Initiatives in Their Lives

<b>Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Approval Type</b>
06/03/2013	06/02/2014	Ia

**(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)****Special Conditions / Comments:**

N/A

File Number: 04-13-23

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/03/2013



**Université d'Ottawa** **University of Ottawa**  
 Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the application for ethical approval for the above named research project as of the Ethics Approval Date indicated for the period above and subject to the conditions listed the section above entitled "Special Conditions / Comments".

During the course of the study the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove subjects from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the study (e.g. change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment documentation, should be submitted to this office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at: <http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms.html>.

Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at: <http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms.html>.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5387 or by e-mail at: [ethics@uOttawa.ca](mailto:ethics@uOttawa.ca).

**Signature:**

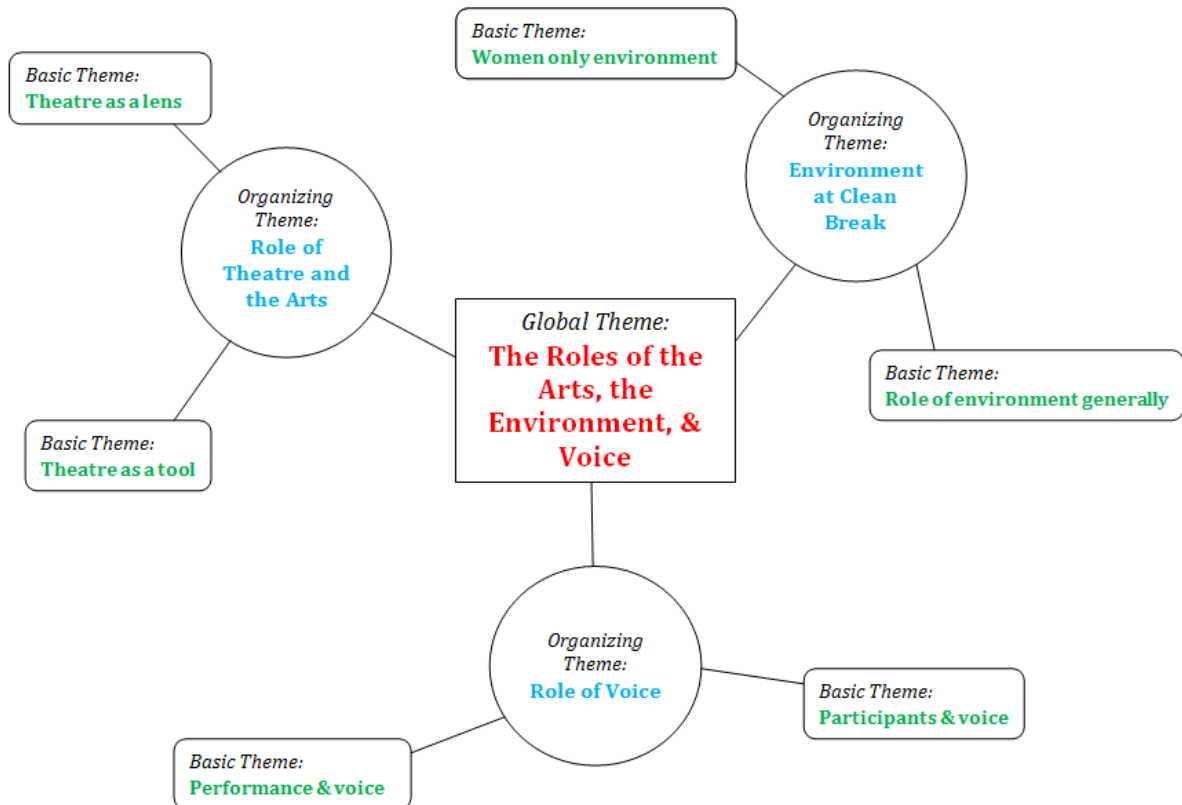
Riana Marcotte  
 Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research  
 For Barbara Graves, Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB

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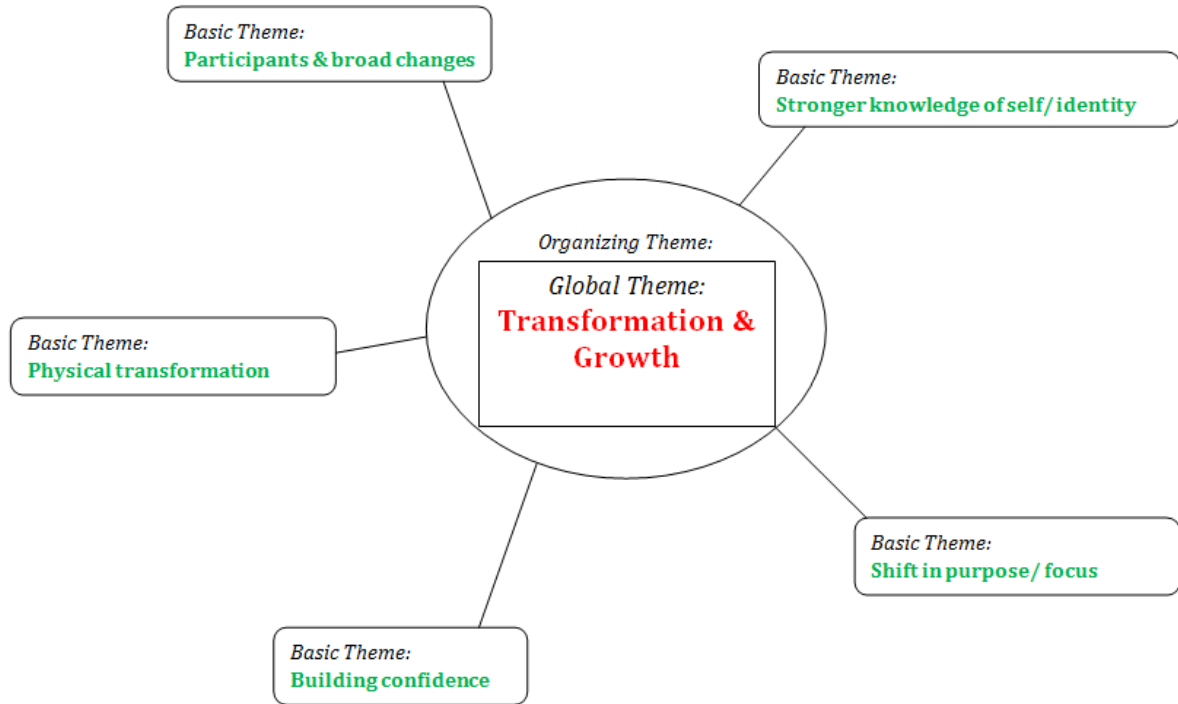
550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154 Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada  
 (613) 562-5387 • Téléc./Fax (613) 562-5338  
<http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/index.html>  
<http://www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie/index.html>

## Appendix F

## i) The Roles of the Arts, the Environment, &amp; Voice



## ii) Transformation & Growth



### iii) Challenges, Limitations, & Barriers

