PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL SAFETY IN CUSTODY AMONG A SAMPLE OF SERIOUS AND VIOLENT INCARCERATED YOUNG OFFENDERS

by

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ABSTRACT

The new Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) (2003) contains the controversial sentencing option allowing young offenders convicted of certain serious and/or violent offences to receive adult length sentences. Critics of the YCJA, and specifically this sentencing option, argued that the impact of prison on young offenders was invariably negative and that society was neither protected, nor were incarcerated serious and violent offenders effectively deterred by longer sentences. Also, there is considerable research indicating that prisons are inherently violent institutions that cause fear among the most vulnerable incarcerated youth. The two predominant explanations for the high level of prison violence are the Importation model and the Deprivation model. The importation literature contends that prison violence is the result of the individual characteristics that offenders bring with them into the prison system. Conversely, the Deprivation model argues that it is the structure and nature of prisons that causes custody facilities to be violent.

Utilizing a sample of 200 incarcerated serious and violent young offenders in Vancouver, B.C., this thesis examines the extent to which youth felt safe while in custody. In addition, a number of independent variables were assessed including age, gender, Aboriginal identity, offender classification, length of time spent in custody, being the victim of physical abuse, hard drug use, perceived levels of institutional violence, and level of custody to analyse their impact on youth's feelings of safety. Using a four stage multiple regression model indicated
a robust relationship between perceived levels of institutional violence and feelings of safety. There were limitations to this thesis research primarily involving the use of a single indicator measure of safety and the absence of several other key independent variables, such as mental disorders within prison group associations, staff rules, and varied prison authority structures.
DEDICATION

To my parents, Vince and Susan.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Until recently, there was very little research examining the impact of custody on juvenile offenders. (Badali and Koegl, 2002). More importantly, there was a lack of research on the effects of incarceration on serious and violent young offenders, making it difficult to assess the prison experience and its possible contributions to subsequent offending. Most studies on prison violence typically focused on either the characteristics of the victims and/or offenders or the institutional environment itself (McCorkle and Terrace, 1995). What was often lacking was an understanding of the complexity of inmate violence and how offenders themselves perceived the extent of violence in institutional life. This thesis explores the literature on juvenile experiences of incarceration, particularly the risk of violence and adjustment to the perceived violent nature of custody (Cesaroni and Badali, 2003). More specifically, this thesis examines an incarcerated youth’s sense of safety. This is important because within Canada, there are growing concerns about the possible negative consequences of custodial violence for young offenders (Badali and Koegl, 2002). Of particular concern is whether prison violence elevates the risk of future violence both within prisons and after an offender is released back into the community.

The quality and quantity of youth crime in Canada is both a political and an empirical issue. Those who believe that youth crime has increased often favour harsher penalties, such as incarceration, for young offenders. In contrast, the view that youth crime has not substantially increased is often associated with
minimizing the extent of youth violence and the impact of crime on victims, while suggesting that leniency is the most appropriate response for dealing with youth crime (Doob and Cesaroni, 2002). Regardless of the position one takes, in both Canada and the United States, the number of young offenders sentenced to custody has increased over the past 10 years. In 1996, youth were sentenced as part of this disposition in 28% of adjudicated cases in the US and 33% in Canada (35% by 1999) (Cesaroni and Badali, 2003). This slight increase in the use of youth custody in Canada has been associated with an intense media and political debate about the youth justice system under the Young Offenders Act (YOA) (Corrado, Bala, Linden, & Le Blanc, 1992). Public anger towards the YOA intensified during the 1990's because of the widely held public perception that this law simply did not protect the public from serious and violent young offenders. Specifically, critics argued that the law did not sufficiently punish the most serious and violent young offenders, and also overused custody for minor offences and those who committed administrative offences, such as breach of probation. Despite several reforms to the YOA throughout the 80's and 90's, its critics continued to argue that this law was based on a fundamentally flawed model of youth justice. The YOA was replaced in 2003 by the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) which was based on a different model of youth justice. It is important, therefore, to discuss the theoretical models underlying these two laws since they are hypothesized to directly impact the type of young offender sentenced to custody, and, to some extent, what happens to them in custody.
For nearly a century, three main theoretical orientations have contributed to the dominant models of youth justice. The positivist theories provided the principles of the Welfare Model of juvenile justice focusing on rehabilitating offenders. Neo-classical theory underlied the Justice model emphasizing punishments proportionate to the seriousness of the crime and due process rights for offenders. The protection of society through the incapacitation of repeat serious and/or violent young offenders provided the theoretical basis for the Crime Control model (Corrado et al., 1992). More recently, the Corporatist model (Pratt, 1989) emphasized diverting most non-serious young offenders from the formal juvenile justice system and processing them administratively through community based and non-judicial programs (as cited in Corrado et al., 1992).

Since the introduction of the YOA, reforms to the law have consistently been based on Crime Control principles. The new Youth Criminal Justice Act reflects the Canadian public's move towards Crime Control principles. However, the YCJA also includes a stronger focus on protecting the public through crime prevention and rehabilitation. The YCJA is a bifurcated model. Custody is reserved for only the most serious and/or repeat offenders, and extrajudicial procedures and less serious sentences are to be used for minor offences, usually property crimes or violations of the administration of justice. In effect, the formal youth criminal justice process, including the most severe sentences, are to be used exclusively with those youth who commit the most violent offences or major multiple property offences. In other words, informal community based processes are used with less serious offenders. The purpose of this approach is to
decrease the use of custody while still holding youth responsible and accountable for their actions (Bell, 2002). Nevertheless, youth who are incarcerated in institutions face a number of challenges, such as the risk of violent victimization, related to prison life. These challenges will be examined through the duration of this thesis.

Since custody is considered the most severe form of punishment within the criminal justice system, criminologists hypothesized that most incarcerated youth would report negative experiences and perceptions regarding their time in a juvenile correctional institution. The few Canadian studies that have examined the impact of custody revealed similar negative impacts (Cesaroni and Badali, 2003; Doob and Cesaroni, 2002). The basic theme of this thesis is to examine a large sample of incarcerated young offenders regarding their experiences in prison to determine whether they perceived high levels of personal safety. A second theme is to explore the relationship between a number of independent variables identified in the research literature and feelings of safety within the institution.

An overview of the research literature regarding incarcerated young offenders highlights two main concerns. First, most of the studies on the custodial impact on young offenders are from the United States. Second, most of the theories and empirical evidence relates to the experience of adults, rather than juveniles. An objective of this thesis is to access the research literature to determine which findings can be generalized to Canada’s youth prisons and to the experiences of incarcerated Canadian young offenders. As is evident in the
adult literature, and the limited youth literature, several variables have consistently been identified as important predictors of the differential impact of prison on individuals. These variables include age, gender, race, type of offending history, and length of time spent in custody. It is also evident that prisons are total institutions inhabited, in part, by aggressive inmates and sometimes angry and often violent staff (MacDonald, 1997b). In effect, the literature depicts prisons as contexts that create fear on an unprecedented level institutionally because of its inherent violent cultural and social relationships. In addition, there is the assertion that both inmates and staff enter the prison context with aggressive violent values and histories (Lyon and Wilson, 2000; MacDonald, 1997b; Bell, 2002).

With respect to the variables listed above, various studies concluded that offenders were treated differently depending on these factors and, therefore, their perceptions of prison life and experiences varied accordingly (Feld, 1997; Bell, 2002; Ellis and Sowers, 1999; Joseph, 1995). For example, minorities in Canada continue to be over represented in custodial institutions and are often treated more harshly in comparison to non-minorities (Bell, 2002; Joseph, 1995). This thesis explores this theme by reviewing Canadian research on Aboriginal offenders. In addition, an examination of the treatment and experience of female offenders will be included to determine how the incarceration experience of girls, as well as how their perceptions of safety, differs from incarcerated boys. Also, the age of incarcerated young offenders is theoretically important because age likely affects perceptions of safety in that younger offenders are hypothesized to
perceive custody as more violent and less safe than older offenders. Finally, the classic “Importation” model is reviewed in this thesis as this model hypothesized that some incarcerated youth bring their violent values into the prison context. Based on this model, it is hypothesized in this thesis that youth with prior violent histories would find youth custody institutions less violent and would feel more safe in the institution than non-violent incarcerated youth. It is further hypothesized that younger offenders, female offenders, and those with less “real-life” prison experience would also have a lower sense of safety in custody.

**Thesis Outline**

Chapter Two of this thesis presents a literature review of juvenile institutions. This chapter begins with an analysis of studies on the negative context of confinement experienced by both adult and juvenile offenders. Some of the more recent research on bullying and victimization in Canadian institutions is also explored as several studies indicated that bullying behaviour was a potential precursor to violent and aggressive behaviour in custody. Also, psychological disorders, learning deficits, and familial instability among incarcerated youth are also examined. It is important to understand how these issues are addressed and dealt with in custodial institutions as they are prominent features that affect a youth’s overall adjustment to institutional life. In addition, the need for gender specific programming and programs for minority youth is also examined as these services are vital considerations for improving the prison experience of young offenders, reducing violence, and increasing perceptions of safety. Chapter Three describes the methodology employed in the
larger research project which generated the data used in this study. The research
concerning fear of crime and safety is also examined. Original work by Ferraro
and LaGrange (1987), Maitland and Sluder (1996), and O'Donnell and Edgar
(1999) is critical to understanding the measurement of “fear of crime”. Chapters
Four and Five describe and discuss the research findings. Respectively, the
analysis of the potential moderating independent variables is reviewed in order to
assess whether the findings in this study are consistent with the literature as
discussed in Chapters Two and Three.
CHAPTER TWO:
PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENCE AND SAFETY IN JUVENILE INSTITUTIONS

Few doubt that prisons are violent. For decades, American and Canadian studies have confirmed this violence in the form of sexual assaults, beatings, and killings in correctional institutions (Bartollas, 1978; O'Donnell and Edgar, 1999; Maitland and Sluder, 1996). While the studies have discussed the extent and factors that contribute to extremely high perceptions of prison violence, what is not so apparent is the degree of safety that youth feel in custody. While it appears to be widely accepted that youth custody facilities to some extent are violent, and, therefore, incarcerated youth are at some risk for victimization, it is still unclear how this potential risk affects their perceived levels of safety. More specifically, is a youth's perception of violence related to their perceptions of safety?

It appears from the lack of research literature, or even media attention, that the public, especially in Canada, is not fully aware of the impact of custody on youth. Still, the majority of Canadians are supportive of the use of prisons for serious and violent offenders (Corrado et al., 1992). As well, the introduction of adult length sentences for serious, violent, and repeat young offenders under the YCJA reflects the political concerns about public anger towards the perceived lack of punitive sentencing in the youth justice system, mainly in the form of lengthy prison sentences. Yet, when the public is made aware of the violence in custody, the typical response is to condemn the neglect, inhumanity, and
brutality, while simultaneously offering support for the continued use of correctional centers (Embry, 2001). According to Embry, the public tends to place the blame on the failure of the system, rather than on the "policies that create and maintain these systems" (2001:97). Instead, certain criminologists argued that it was the deprivation and abuses of power that resulted from the power inequalities intrinsic to juvenile institutions that explained perceptions of violence and safety (Bortner and Williams, 1997). These critics claimed that the fundamental power inequalities were not between the violent youth and their victims, but between the criminal justice agents, such as prison staff, and the impoverished multi-problem and, too often, minority youth inmates. In effect, what was ignored by the public, the criminal justice system, and some criminologists was the deprivation and the abuses of power that resulted from the power inequalities between staff and youth intrinsic to juvenile institutions (Bortner and Williams, 1997).

**Models of Importation and Deprivation**

In reviewing the literature on the impact of custody on youth, Griffiths and Cunningham (2000) maintained that incarceration was definitely a significant life event. For many incarcerated youth, custody was one of the most traumatic lifetime stressors, overtaken only by familial issues, such as the death or divorce of one's parents (Doob and Cesaroni, 2002). One reason was that custody was the longest period spent away from home, and, for very young offenders, it may be the first time away from family and friends (Doob and Cesaroni, 2002). Yet, it was evident that not only age determines how youth would be affected by
custody. Both the adult and youth research literature reported considerable variation in the impact of prison depending on the characteristics that differentiated youth when they entered prison or the structure and culture of the prison that youth had to adapt to (Doob and Cesaroni, 2002; Bartollas, 2003).

Two theoretical models dominated the explanation of the perceived levels of violence that occur in prisons; the Importation model and the Deprivation model (Bartollas, 1978). Ellis, Grasmick, and Gilman (1974) asserted that the majority of problems in juvenile institutions, particularly regarding violence and aggression, can be explained by these two models. The fundamental distinction between these models is whether violence and aggression in youth prisons was the result of a youth's response to the prison environment (deprivation) or if these norms, values, and morals concerning violence and aggression were imported into the institution from sources that are unrelated to prison life (importation).

The Importation model

The cultural importation approach assumes that a youth's violent and aggressive behaviour was the result of the values and beliefs that they developed prior to their incarceration. Often these values were developed within the family, the school, and among peers (Flowers, 2002; Bartollas, 2000). Aggressive and violent behaviour among children at an early age was often the type of behaviour that children would exhibit as they approached adolescence. Factors such as poor family upbringing, dysfunctional family backgrounds, early failure in school, delinquent peer groups, drug and alcohol abuse, and the
presence of psychological deficits all influenced and contributed to the further development of violence and aggression and delinquency in later life (Embry, 2001; Bell, 2002; Bartollas, 2003). This Importation model contends that lower-class offenders were more likely to import a set of violent subcultural attitudes and values with them into prison (Bartollas, 1978). In other words, the importation literature suggested that offenders with prior violent involvements differed from those offenders with little or no previous violent histories. As such, these two groups of offenders would also, therefore, differ with respect to their perceived levels of violence and safety in the institution. However, the importation of violent values, and their impact on both engaging in violence and feeling safe, are likely to vary depending on individual characteristics, such as gender, age, race, the extent of prior violence, prison youth gang involvement, and the specific prison context, such as the active presence of gangs, the availability of drugs, and the attitudes of prison staff towards either utilizing violence to control youth or condoning it as a form of punishment (Bartollas, 1978; Feld, 1977; Doob and Cesaroni, 2002). Also, specific offender characteristics, such as race and age, are likely to affect or influence prison staff’s perceptions of offenders who are most likely to be perpetrators of institutional violence. In addition, some have argued that the dynamics of female peer violence differs from males due to the specific nature of imported gender differences. In other words, girls are considered typically to be less aggressive and violent than boys (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 1998; Bartollas, 2003; Bell, 2002). In effect, the Importation model
takes into account variations in both individual characteristics and prison contexts to explain both perceptions of violence and feelings of safety.

Despite some empirical support for the Importation model, its critics argued that it was difficult to determine whether this model could adequately address how specific imported factors influenced inmate violence (McCorkle and Terrance, 1995). For example, this model provides very little insight on how violent groups developed in some prisons but not others, and why certain youth were violent within prison even though they did not necessarily have pre-prison histories of violence. Most importantly, critics contended that this model did not account for the fundamental differences in prison cultures and administration that can diminish or increase the likelihood of prison violence. Moreover, critics of the Importation model argued that it was the prison culture and structure that deprived incarcerated youth of the non-violent life-styles more typical of daily life outside of prisons. Therefore, most youth had little choice but to engage in violence and/or or fear becoming victimized. In effect, detractors of the Importation model argued that prisons were inherently more violent than the neighbourhoods or families that youth were coming from (McCorkle and Terrance, 1995).

The Deprivation model

The second theoretical model that attempts to explain perceptions of violence in institutions is the Deprivation model. Support for this model was based on a number of studies that suggested that institutional violence and aggression was the direct result of the context of the prisons (Ellis and Sowers,
1999). In addition, there was consensus in the literature that violence and aggression were inherent to the inmate subculture, regardless of whether it was a youth or an adult custody facility.

The Deprivation model asserts that violence and aggression in prison was the direct result of the stressful conditions created by the prison environment. Factors such as overcrowding, poor visiting patterns, and lack of social, recreational, and educational programs all contributed to increased levels of boredom and social disorder. In response, the majority of prison violence occurred as a result of these adverse conditions. In other words, the violence in prisons was caused by the structure and environment of prisons and was often designed to reduce the explosive tension that routinely built among inmates. Paradoxically, however, the cycle of violence increased the likelihood that inmates would become more frustrated, fearful, join violent groups, and perpetuate the cycle of violence and fear (McCorkle and Terrace, 1995). This cycle was unremitting largely because inmates, especially younger inmates, had to adapt to the total institutional environment of prisons which deprive them of normal or routine liberties. The main limitation of this model is that it does not consider individual or collective factors, such as adjustment to prison life, mental disorders, or substance abuse as mitigating the effects of deprivation on prison violence. This model also does not provide an explanation of why all inmates are not violent while in prison. In other words, if it is the context of prisons that is responsible for inmate violence, why are all inmates not violent?

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Factors That Affect the Impact of Importation and Deprivation in a Custodial Setting

Modes of Adaptation to Custody

One of the leading factors impacting the level of prison violence is the degree to which inmates accept and adjust to life in custody. Numerous theories have been offered to explain the transition of a youth to custody. McCorkle’s (1993) research on adult offenders argued that prison life was expected to be "uncomfortable" and, similar to adult offenders, young offenders were strongly affected by the "pains of imprisonment" (McCorkle, 1993; Bartollas, 2000; Griffiths and Cunningham, 2000). The pains of imprisonment include a loss of one or more of the following: (1) liberty; (2) access to goods and services; (3) access to heterosexual relations; (4) personal autonomy; (5) personal security; and (6) the coercion of a punishment-oriented environment. According to Griffiths and Cunningham (2000), inmates also encountered the process of prisonization where they were forced to adapt to the principles of the inmate code. This code is a set of norms that governed interaction of inmates and institutional staff and included the values of (1) doing your own time; (2) avoiding the prison economy; (3) not trusting anyone; and (4) showing respect to other inmates (Griffiths and Cunningham, 2000: 221-222).

A related process, "mortification," also affected the adjustment process for young offenders from being free citizens to becoming an inmate. This process involved the physical, material, and emotional transformation of an individual into an inmate. This process begins when the offender is issued prison clothing, given a number, separated from their personal possessions, and cut off from most
private communications (Griffiths and Cunningham, 2000). In effect, incarcerated offenders are taken from their previous environment to an inflexible context of strict rules and regulations. Again, even though most of the research which describes this transformation was based on adult offenders, it was hypothesized that incarcerated youth would routinely experience the same process.

Griffiths and Cunningham (2000) further specified the social roles ascribed to incoming adult inmates by other inmates. These roles constituted a hierarchal classification system. For example, inmates could be classified as a: (1) square/john, i.e., the inmate who sucked up to staff members; (2) right guy, i.e., the inmate who is often opposed to other inmates and staff members; (3) tough, i.e., an inmate who is often feared by other inmates and staff members; (4) wolf, fag, or punk, i.e., an inmate who engaged in various types of sexual relations; and (5) merchant, i.e., an inmate who is responsible for importing/distributing drugs and money (Griffiths and Cunningham, 2000). These labels reflected how inmates were seen to adapt to prison life by other inmates, including their associations with prison staff, intimate relationships, friendships, economic opportunities, and other personal needs, such as drugs and alcohol and safety.

Researchers have also argued that incarcerated youth develop various methods for adapting to life in custody (Flowers, 2002). Again, the importation perspective states that youth base their institutional perceptions of violence and perceive their levels of safety based on their individual backgrounds, values, and life experiences prior to being incarcerated. However, despite these imported individual level differences, all youth develop some method for adapting to
prison, most commonly in ways that meet their needs while allowing them to avoid adverse or dangerous situations (Flowers, 2002; Bartollas, 2000). Nonetheless, some youth adapt a rebellious mode of adaptation; youth rebel against staff and authority figures through protests, threats, intimidation, and encouraging others to join in displaying their dissatisfaction (Flowers, 2002). Another method of adaptation is "playing it cool"; youth control and suppress their emotions to make their time in prison as comfortable as possible. A final method of adaptation is withdrawal; inmates suppress their anxieties with either drugs or by escaping from the institution (Flowers, 2002; Bell, 2002). These various modes of adaptation all include some strategy to respond to the deprivation they face in prison, and to increase their level of safety while incarcerated. It can be argued that rebellious modes of adaptation indicate a youth who is aggressive and largely unafraid, whereas the withdrawal method suggests the opposite. There is, therefore, a consensus in both the adult and youth incarceration literature that there are several methods for responding to the aggressive and violent nature of prison and the consequent perceptions of violence and safety.

**Prison Adaptation Among Female Young Offenders**

All of the aforementioned research and theory was based on male inmates. However, over the past decade researchers have begun to recognize that prison experiences of females differed substantially from their male and non-minority counterparts (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 1998). In terms of the Importation model, research indicated that girls often entered prisons from family and peer group backgrounds involving higher levels of physical and sexual abuse
and emotional neglect in comparison to boys (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 1998; Corrado, Odgers, and Cohen, 2000). Also, incarcerated girls disproportionately and consistently had multi-problem profiles consisting of: high incidences of physical and sexual abuse; addiction to hard drugs; high drop out rates in school along with poor academic and employment success; and chronic familial problems and abuse (Corrado et al., 2000; Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 1998).

With respect to the Deprivation model, there was a consensus among researchers that girls reacted to their prison experiences differently than boys. However, there was disagreement concerning how girls were treated by judicial and prison staff, and how girls adapted to prison violence.

Currently, the dominant perspective is that girls are discriminated against and treated more punitively than boys because of the paternalistic ideology of the juvenile justice system (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 1998). More so than for males, incarceration was used to protect girls from sexual experimentation or other dangers related to street life. Also, there often appeared to be a greater concern among judges and corrections staff for the protection of the sexual status quo than there was with the protection of these young women. As a result, most incarceration experiences for girls were uncomfortable and degrading (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 1998).

This protective policy towards young female offenders has led researchers to question whether the experiences of girls in juvenile institutions are fundamentally different from their male counterparts. In Canada, there is consensus among researchers that girls were treated less harshly in comparison
to males, however, girls were more likely to be institutionalised for less serious offences and to be incarcerated for the first time at a younger age than males (Bell, 2002; Odgers, 2001; Schwartz, Steketee, Schneider, Cavazos, Willis and Sarri, 1989). Girls were more likely to be sentenced to custody for breaches of probation and administrative offences compared to males. A survey conducted in British Columbia in 1998 concluded that almost half (44.8%) of female youth were incarcerated for breaches of court orders (Bell, 2002). This finding provided further support for the hypothesis that, when just considering prior record, girls likely imported far less serious violent behaviour into prison than boys. However, the ability of female young offenders to adapt to prison violence was likely affected more negatively because of their greater prevalence of multi-problem profiles. For example, studies have reported between 45% - 75% of incarcerated girls have been sexually abused (Corrado and Cohen, 2002). And, girls have much higher levels of suicide ideation and suicide attempts than males (Odgers, 2001; Bell, 2002). Moreover, girls tend to come from families characterized by greater levels of substance abuse than males. Again, these findings suggest girls are more likely to react differently then boys to perceptions of violence within youth prisons and to have different perceived levels of safety.

Chesney-Lind and Sheldon (1998) asserted that theories of delinquency were biased by life experiences of males who have much different developmental histories, behaviours, and life options than females. In other words, male centered theories utilized to explain female delinquency failed to address fundamental female differences. One negative consequence was that prison
research studies did not address the gender specific programming needs of female young offenders. This is important because a substantial body of research indicated that youth custody institutions were not properly equipped to respond to the special needs of female youth, especially in regards to extreme drug addictions and abuse. According to Bell,

to some extent, young female offenders suffer from the greater degree of social conformity of their female peers if they offend, their minority representation in the youth justice system inhibits the development of specialized programs, especially in respect to custody and alternatives to custody...

[S]imply put, there are numerous financial and practical obstacles to developing specialized programs, precisely because of small numbers (2002: 323).

In the United States, Chesney-Lind and Sheldon (1998) found institutional conditions for female youth to be very unsuitable. As well, a review by the American Bar Association in the late 1970's concluded:

We found conditions for young women equally unsuitable: the facilities had cells with only a bed and a blanket and no toilet; limited or no opportunities for recreation; few chances to be in the company of other inmates and long periods behind locked doors. The impression of one detained girl described the problem more vividly: I thought that I was going crazy for a while just being locked up all the time.... I was locked up on the upper floor because the boys were down below, and I was just locked up in the day and night. And the only time I saw anybody was when they brought my food up to me (Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 1998: 171-172).

There was also concern in the early 1970's over the administration of invasive procedures among females. Many young women were subjected to the administration of pelvic examinations in cities, such as New York, Philadelphia, and Louisiana (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 1998). This process was not only a degrading experience for young women, but also a violation of their right to privacy. Although seemingly justified from a medical standpoint, the routine and
repeated administration of these pelvic exams for the detection of venereal disease and/or pregnancy suggested that the courts continued to confound female delinquency with sexuality (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 1998). While these types of invasions of privacy were and are unlikely to occur in Canada, they, nonetheless, can be seen in the context of greater female vulnerability to abuse within the prison context. However, it is not evident whether this potential vulnerability, in the contemporary context of considerable protection rights of incarcerated youth, and girls in particular, results in girls perceiving a higher level of violence and a related lower level of safety in custody than boys.

In terms of punitiveness, there is some evidence to suggest that girls often viewed their custodial sentences as guided by the principle of protection more than punishment, especially compared to males (Corrado et al., 2000). However, Moretti, Odgers, and Jackson (2004) contend that the traditional view of violence being overwhelmingly perpetuated by males is changing. While males clearly remain responsible for the majority of violent offending, in certain jurisdictions, the historical ratio of 10 violent male incidents for every violent incident committed by females dropped to 4 to 1. Trend data further indicated that, in certain jurisdictions, female violent crime over the last decade has increased 300 percent. Morretti et al., (2004) theorized that media images of girls as tough and aggressive, along with widely publicized or sensationalized cases of vicious girl perpetrated murders, such as the killing of Reena Virk in Victoria, BC, have had an impact on the popularity of tough girl identity stereotypes among marginalized girls. As such, the research provides mixed findings on importation and
deprivation and their effects on female adaptation to custody and their perceptions on prison violence and safety. On the one hand, researchers point to the evidence that female offenders are frequently characterized as multi-problematic with extensive physical and sexual abuse and substance use histories, while other researchers focus on the failure of prisons to recognize and address the special needs of female young offenders.

**Prison Adaptation Among Minority Offenders**

Researchers have also assessed the extent to which ethnic/racial minority status affects the relationship between perceptions of violence and perceptions of safety in both adult and youth prisons. To a considerable extent, this factor became theoretically prominent largely because of the vastly disproportionate number of adult and young Black or Afro-American male and female offenders in U.S. prisons. Similarly, in the U.S., there are disproportionate numbers of incarcerated Hispanic and Aboriginal youth. In the U.S., major race/ethnic based gang structures were replicated in both adult and youth prisons which were routinely the cause of sustained violence and excessive fear within prisons (Klein, 1995). In effect, ethnic/race based gangs in the U.S. were often the basis of the Importation model in that convicted gang members replicated their gang structures inside prisons. Therefore, violence was an integral part of the prison environment and culture. Youth who did not belong to gangs were more likely to be victimized as they did not have the protection of gang membership. As such, variations in the perception of safety were associated with both gang membership and ethnicity/race factors.
However, with the exception of Manitoba prisons, ethnic/race gang structures have not been traditional in Canada (Giles, 2000). Nonetheless, the race variable is important in Canada because of the disproportionate number of Aboriginal adults and youth in prison. In addition, Aboriginal incarcerated young offenders often have a higher prevalence of multi-problem profiles (Corrado and Cohen, 2002). More specifically, in Canada, the overuse of custody for Aboriginal youth and culturally inappropriate programming found in youth prisons had become such an important public issue, that the YCJA has specific provisions for the sentencing and treatment of Aboriginal youth in conflict with the law. Research indicated that Aboriginal offenders were disproportionately sentenced to custody and held in remand for longer periods of time than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Corrado and Cohen, 2002). Overuse of custody often stems from a lack of culturally specific alternatives to custody for Aboriginal young offenders.

There are few studies of how Aboriginal youth adapt to custody. An important study conducted by MacDonald (1997b) investigated physical and mental health data for the Aboriginal youth in B.C. Nearly half (44.4%) of the youth sampled suffered from major mental health problems, while 11.1% reported having serious physical health problems (MacDonald, 1997b). High levels of physical and sexual abuse, by Aboriginal young offenders prior to being institutionalised, were also reported. Quite alarming, a majority of the youth who reported being physically and/or sexually abused in prison also reported being abused prior to their prison experience (MacDonald, 1997b). Cawsey’s (1991) and LaPrairie’s (1998) research provided additional support for MacDonald's
findings that most Aboriginal young offenders were raised in environments characterized by high levels of sexual, physical, substance, and/or emotional abuse. For example, Cawsey (1991) and LaPrairie (1998) independently reported that incarcerated youth characterized violence and abuse as routine activities within their homes (as cited in MacDonald, 1997b).

According to MacDonald (1997b), more than half (60%) of incarcerated Aboriginal youth were addicted to drugs or alcohol. This figure was consistent with similar levels of drug and alcohol abuse reported in many Aboriginal communities. Research on serious and violent incarcerated young offenders conducted by Corrado and Cohen (2002) reported that 95% of Aboriginal male young offenders and 94% of Aboriginal female young offenders reported using drugs. MacDonald (1997b) asserted that pre-incarceration alcohol/drug use was predictive of the continuation of abuse throughout a youth’s incarceration period. Somewhat surprising, many of the youth admitted that the levels of drug and alcohol use within prisons were connected to the considerable drug and contraband activity in these institutions (MacDonald, 1997b). Given the continuation of alcohol/drug problems among incarcerated Aboriginal youth, MacDonald (1997b) was concerned with the perceptions of discrimination and its negative impacts on Aboriginal youth. A major concern involved self-harm, particularly suicide. According to this research, Aboriginal youth committed twice the number of suicides than non-Aboriginal youth, and 70%-75% of Aboriginal suicides were considered related to alcohol and/or drug abuse (MacDonald, 1997b).
In addition to drugs and alcohol and substance abuse being related to increased perceptions of institutional violence and safety, racism has been considered an important factor. Approximately one half (51.1%) of Aboriginal youth claimed that they had been the target of some form of racist behaviour by other inmates or staff (MacDonald, 1997b). Aboriginal youth reported that the majority of racist behaviour directed at them was perpetrated by non-Aboriginal inmates. However, Aboriginal youth stated that most racist behaviour was minor and rarely resulted in any major confrontations between staff and youth. Equally important in understanding the potential negative prison context for Aboriginal youth are the attitudes and behaviours of staff. Most Aboriginal youth (80%) reported that they did not feel that the correctional staff were racist. For the most part, line staff were perceived by Aboriginal young offenders as having treated them well and that prejudicial attitudes were minimal. The most common method of expressing racist attitudes was in the form of joke telling. Both Aboriginal youth and senior management agreed that line staff treated Aboriginal youth “well,” and MacDonald (1997b) concluded that there was no evidence of overt discriminatory behaviour. Consistent with this view was the near three quarters of Aboriginal youth (73.3%) who did not want the staff to change the way they treated minority inmates. Only a few Aboriginal youth offered suggestions for change, including limiting the amount of personal problems that staff brought to work, decreasing the amount of “head games” played by staff members, decreasing strictness and rules, and decreasing the disrespectful treatment of residents. However,
Aboriginal youth admitted that these changes would have to be reciprocated by the inmates (MacDonald, 1997b).

In addition to the impact of racism within prison contexts, perceived levels of violence and its link to a sense of safety may be affected, for Aboriginal youth, by the fact that many feel isolated from their families and communities because of the geographic distance between their homes and the custody facility. Aboriginal youth whose families are not within commuting distance of the prison may feel increased levels of anger and/or alienation. These youth are more likely to feel like “outsiders” compared to youth whose families visit regularly. In discussing this phenomenon, Bell claims that:

The fact that existing correctional facilities are situated far from Aboriginal communities is a problem. Successive governments have refused to consider establishing appropriate facilities for youth who reside in Northern Manitoba. Most young people from the north have no contact with their family or friends during their incarceration. Because of distance and cost, these young people do not have the opportunity to visit their homes and to prepare for their eventual release. This is a lesser problem for Aboriginal families in the south, but even they have trouble visiting family members who are in custody (2002: 316).

This isolation pattern occurs in British Columbia as well since Aboriginal reserves are often located far from urban and rural youth detention centres.

There is little doubt that Aboriginal youth import distinctive cultural values and experiences, in varying degrees, into the prison context. However, it is not generally evident in the research literature whether these factors affect their perceptions of institutional violence and safety. In contrast, as discussed above, there is evidence in Manitoba that importation occurred in the adult correctional system given the presence of Aboriginal youth/adult gangs in prisons and their
association with major outbreaks of violence in the form of prison riots (Giles, 2000). However, another hypothesized factor in understanding the key violence/safety hypothesis in this thesis involves the extent to which Aboriginal incarcerated youth perceived the criminal justice system, including the correctional system, as non-discriminatory.

In the U.S., Poole and Regoli (1983) argued that systemic discrimination did exist in the prison system and that it often began with correctional officers. Their power, though somewhat diminished as a result of the civil and human rights movements of the last 20 years, is still considerable. Most corrections personnel have considerable discretion in deciding whether an inmate has violated institutional rules and what punitive consequences would occur. Feld (1977) argued that staff behaviour was one of the most important variables in determining the nature of the inmate subculture of violence and aggression and perceptions of safety. Similarly, in the Canadian context, both MacDonald (1997b) and Doob and Cesaroni (2002) maintained that staff behaviour were extremely important in aggravating and mitigating this relationship. MacDonald (1997a) claimed that perceptions of discrimination were often based on the sanctions and/or treatment youth received in prison. Specifically, he asserted that consistency in treatment was particularly important for incarcerated youth since they knew more than the general public about the types of sanctions others typically received for similar offences and prison violations. In effect, inmates routinely compared their treatment to other inmates who were incarcerated for similar offences, and the reactions of prison officials to similar violations by
different youth. Accordingly, the more often correctional officials, and the
disciplinary process through which the prison was controlled, were perceived as
legitimate by inmates, the more likely inmates would be willing to cooperate
(MacDonald, 1997a). Conversely, if youth viewed their treatment as unfair, their
negative perceptions of authority and the institutional environment would become
heightened. In turn, the prison environment would more likely become tense,
volatile, and less safe. Poole and Regoli (1983) suggested however that the
differences in offending patterns between ethnic groups often resulted in racially
biased staff reporting systems, which, in turn, created what could be perceived
as discriminatory sanctioning decisions among inmates.

Another study of inmate adjustment by gender, age, and race was
conducted by Lyon and Wilson (2000). This sample was comprised of 84 young
people (58 young men and 26 young women), 19 of whom were black, Asian, or
mixed race. The conclusions drawn from this study suggested that young people
“provide a powerful reinforcement for crime reduction under the Government’s
agenda” (Lyon and Wilson, 2000: 7). The study was organized into three stages.
The first stage focused on the youth’s experiences prior to being incarcerated,
the second stage examined the offenders experiences while in prison, and the
final stage assessed their feelings regarding release. The outcome of this study,
which was similar to other studies examining youth feelings of incarceration,
found variations with respect to race/ethnicity. In other words, many of the
minority youth expressed dissatisfaction with the level of professionalization
exhibited by prison staff and management. In addition, many of these youth
noted that they were disgusted by the “sloppiness” of staff and management in carrying out certain services. They reported that because of the sloppiness, the delivery of certain services were both “frustrating and easy to exploit” (Lyon and Wilson, 2000: 7).

Many youth also reported that a major concern was the lack of understanding by the custody staff. According to Lyon and Wilson (2000), a significant concern among young offenders was the lack of respect that they received from staff. These attitudes were similar to what MacDonald’s (1997b) study discovered with respect to Aboriginal youth. For example, in MacDonald’s (1997b) study, Aboriginal youth expressed concern regarding the level of racism and violence that they experienced in custody. For these youth, the level of racism and violence was difficult to dismiss as this was something that they had also been subjected to prior to being incarcerated (Lyon and Wilson, 2000; MacDonald, 1997b). Moreover, specific ethnic youth groups often felt that they were victims of unnecessary use of power from other youth in custody (Lyon and Wilson, 2000). Still, other research with Aboriginal offenders suggested that, as a group, Aboriginal youth felt that they were treated as fairly as other offenders (Corrado et al., 2000; MacDonald, 1997b).

Even with the belief among the majority of Aboriginal young offenders that they are treated as fairly as other inmates, according to MacDonald (1997b), Aboriginal youth still expressed their concerns regarding the lack of facilities or programs to meet their specific needs. As a result, inmates form negative views of the prison environment before they have had time to adapt making it difficult
for them to settle into the system. Still, Lyon and Wilson (2000) contended that not all Aboriginal inmates held negative views of the prison environment or reported negative conditions within the institution. In particular, in MacDonald's (1997b) study, Aboriginal inmates indicated that the conditions of the institution were not as bad as they anticipated prior to being incarcerated. Many of the Aboriginal inmates thought that prison would be an environment in which they would be raped or beaten and, for the most part, this was not the case. Like their Aboriginal counterparts, non-Aboriginal young offenders also reported that the conditions in prison were not as bad as they had imagined prior to being incarcerated (MacDonald, 1997b). In Lyon and Wilson's (2000) study, several youth stated that their entry into the institution was, in many cases, a relief, and prison life was nothing like what they expected or imagined.

One of the female youth actually reported that the induction period was somewhat helpful. She claimed that "it was helpful, it worked" (Lyon and Wilson, 2000: 46). An 18-year-old male inmate reported:

My first impression of prison was grim, because I thought it was about twenty times worse than it really is.... I expected to see people bashing themselves and stuff, having to be a big bad man to be prepared to fight everyone... I thought it was going to be like that film "Scrubbers" (Lyon and Wilson, 2000: 30).

While the literature is limited on young offender's perceptions of the institutional environment, many youth reported that they had to discover for themselves the everyday demands of institutional life. Overall, the majority of the youth reported that the induction period was not helpful because most of it was spent inside their cells:
I've just come here right and I've done an induction thing, and like for the last 3 days... I've been to the gym once, and since then I've been asking to go to the gym... I've been banged up in my cell all week (Lyon and Wilson, 2000: 30).

**Bullying, Violence and Victimization**

Several studies examined the impact of the prison environment on inmate victimization (Mutchnick and Fawcett, 1990; Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987; Cesaroni and Badali, 2003; Wooldredge, 1999; Ellis and Sowers, 1999; Biggam and Power, 1999; MacDonald, 1997a; Feld, 1977; Thomas, 1977). Thomas's (1977) research indicated that a combination of importation and deprivation factors affected variations in inmate victimization. Feld (1981) concluded that “while prison imposes deprivations, violence and exploitation provide at least some inmates with a potential solution, albeit at the expense of other inmates” (1981: 339). Furthermore, Feld suggested that many of the pains of imprisonment, such as material deprivations, sexual isolation, and threats of status were alleviated through the use of violence. However, others have argued that inmate violence also reflected the personal characteristics of those in prison (Mutchnick and Fawcett, 1990). It appears, then, that elements of both the Importation and the Deprivation models interact in occurrences of prison violence.

Poole and Regoli (1983) found that both age and length of incarceration had a direct effect on attitudes towards aggression and pre-institutional violence. In effect, younger incarcerated youth were more likely to report that their sentence length had a direct effect with their attitudes towards aggression and pre-institutional violence. Further research indicated that an offender's physical
size and prior record were also relevant factors associated with inmate violence. As well, youth who had a previous record for serious offences were most often left alone (Mutchnick and Fawcett, 1990).

One of the most common forms of aggression among adolescents is bullying (Biggam and Power, 1999). Most children and adolescents have experienced teasing or negative labelling. While hurtful, most youth appear to be able to cope, adjust, or avoid this type of bullying. However, in the prison context, bullying can affect a victim’s perception of violence and sense of safety. As mentioned above, negative labelling by other incarcerated youth can put victims at greater risk of physical violence. Other forms of bullying can include physical intimidation and minor assaults. In addition, repeated incidences of bullying can have a multiplying effect which can place a victim in a far greater threat context than a single incident. Another dimension is escalating bullying where the victim initially experiences minor bullying behaviour which advances to more serious subsequent bullying. In effect, bullying is a complex phenomenon and its various dimensions can affect both perceptions of violence and an inmate’s related perceptions of safety.

Connell and Farrington (1996) provided a definitional structure of bullying and its relevance to prison contexts. Bullying can be defined as the “repeated oppression of a less powerful person by a more powerful one” (Connell and Farrington, 1996: 75). Bullying, therefore can be classified into three stages. In the first stage, there is the presence of a physical, verbal, or psychological attack on an individual often accompanied by either a threat or intimidation with the
purpose of causing some degree of fear or distress to the victim. Second, there is an imbalance of physical power with the more powerful individual overpowering the timid or less powerful individual. Third, there is a continuous series of incidents between the two individuals over a prolonged period of time (Connell and Farrington, 1996).

While the violent aggressive context of prisons appears to facilitate bullying, more generally, violence is regarded as normative (Maitland and Sluder, 1996). Also, as mentioned above, there is consensus among researchers that some youth are at greater risk than others for victimization. According to Adams (1992), "predatory inmates tend to select as victims inmates who are perceived to be weak and easy targets, either because they are physically unimpressive or because they are intellectually or emotionally limited" (as cited in Cesaroni and Badali, 2003: 5). Moreover, Maitland and Sluder (1998) observed that victims experienced more psychological problems, had increased levels of fear of being victimized, and experienced the pains of imprisonment more than non-victims (Maitland and Sluder, 1998). As well, inmates who feared being victimized tended to have more conflicts with their peers and/or guards (Cesaroni and Badali, 2003).

Connell and Farrington (1996) found that among inmates in prison, bullies were often awarded a higher status by other inmates and staff. However, bullying was also accompanied by negative connotations, such as immaturity. Nonetheless, being a bullying victim was still perceived as more stigmatising than
being a bully. More generally, this stigmatisation occurred for other forms of violence as well.

In a Canadian study, Connell and Farrington (1996) reported that 70% of males had been involved in some form of bullying, either as perpetrators or as victims. Similarly, Biggam and Powers (1999) claimed that between 20% - 45% of inmates in young offender institutions mentioned that they had been victimized during the course of their current sentence. Gender differences were evident as males specialized in more physical or violent bullying behaviour, while females participated in more emotional bullying behaviours, such as name calling and social exclusion (Connell and Farrington, 1996).

Connell and Farrington (1996) appeared to lend support to the importation theory of bullying in youth prisons. These researchers found fundamental differences between bullies and victims. The former had more extensive criminal records, higher levels of substance abuse, delinquent or criminal peers, and multi-problem families. In effect, bullies entered prison with aggressive and multi-problem histories. Like school contexts, prisons provided bullies access to victims and reward incentives, such as domination status among peers. While bullying was a strong indicator of past delinquencies and future criminality, Connell and Farrington (1996) maintained that this behaviour provided immediate gains, especially within the aggressive and violent prison context.

In contrast, the victim's profile and fear experiences were fundamentally different. Beck (1994) conducted one of the largest studies on bullying in British prisons. He concluded that those offenders with little prison experience were
more likely to be victimized than those that had been incarcerated longer. Other researchers indicated that first time offenders were more likely to be victimized in a custodial institution since they were unaware of the informal and formal institutional regulations. Also, younger youth were more likely than older youth to be bullied. For Connell and Farrington (1996), this age pattern reflected the importance of developmental stages in explaining bullying, i.e. the persistence of bullying among older inmates likely indicated a more violent lifestyle. As well, older adolescents were typically bigger and more experienced in bullying tactics.

Bullying behaviour most often arose in situations that provided specific opportunities for the behaviour. In prison, potential opportunities existed due to the nature of the institution itself, especially regarding inadequate supervision (Styve, MacKenzie, Gover, & Mitchell, 2000; Wooldredge, 1999). Again, however, other studies challenged this structural theory of violence and argued that the violent social setting had no influence on the behaviour of incarcerated youth or on their psychological adjustment (Biggam and Power, 1999; Wooldredge, 1999). These researchers claimed that other factors associated with the importation theory explained prison violence. However, there was agreement that bullying needed to be addressed in order to reduce the level of violence within prisons (Connell and Farrington, 1996; Badali and Cesaroni, 2003; Biggam and Power, 1999). One of the difficulties in dealing with bullying behaviour is that it often resembles general aggressive behaviour (Connell and Farrington, 1996). In their study, Connell and Farrington reported that 85% of residents in young offender institutions believed that bullying was an inevitable
part of custodial life. Most importantly, bullying was viewed as instrumental in gaining benefits and advantages within prison.

Feld (1977) argued that violence, particularly bullying, in juvenile institutions involved “tough boys dominating inferior boys by physical force” (1977: 132). Violence often resulted from ineffective intervention by institutional staff. According to Feld “violence is a direct, uncomplicated, pervasive, and economical form of social control” (1977: 132). In comparison to adult offenders, young offenders were more likely to be respected for their physical prowess and/or ability to “take it from others”. Consequently, Ellis et al., (1974) asserted that younger inmates often used violence more than adults to demonstrate their status and power within prisons.

The inmate victimization literature focuses mainly on adult institutions. Several dimensions of this victimization experience have been identified. Bowker (1979) claimed that “the victimization of prisoners in correctional settings is a continuous process, extending through all hours of the day and night” (as cited in Mutchnick and Fawcett, 1990: 44). Similar to other studies, the prison environment, the physical size of offenders, race, and age of the inmate were related to the vulnerability of being victimized (MacDonald, 1997a; Bell; 2002; Flowers; 2002). In one of the few studies to compare adult prisons and a youth prison, Mutchnick and Fawcett (1990) reported that the juvenile institution had an assault rate of 21.7%, twice the average of adult institutions. They claimed that both importation and deprivation theories were important in explaining violence in adult and youth prisons.
Regarding the role of staff in facilitating violence within juvenile prisons, Feld (1977) was among the first researchers in the U.S to describe the gap between rehabilitation and punishment. For much of the 20th century, U.S. and Canadian juvenile custodial institutions were considered rehabilitative, rather than punitive. According to Feld (1977), like adult prisons, juveniles were sent to industrial schools or training centres in order to develop their skills, mature in a positive and disciplined school environment, develop a strong moral character, and then return to the community without the stigma of a criminal record. In effect, defining youth as delinquents, rather than criminals, the industrial schools and training centres were supposed to represent non-punitive environments for the youth who were sent there. However, Feld (1977) revealed that juvenile delinquent custodial institutions were not operated according to these Welfare model corrections principles. He described several institutions in which staff routinely physically punished residents and failed to prevent physical abuse and homosexual rape to the most vulnerable youth by the more violent inmates (Feld, 1977). Other U.S. studies revealed a similarly violent and oppressive institutional environment for “treating” young delinquents (Bartallas, Miller, & Dinitz, 1976).

In effect, according to Feld (1977), there were many well-documented state reports that revealed widespread violence in juvenile institutions, including considerable staff violence, inmate aggression, and homosexual rape. Most of these evaluations of juvenile institutional conditions and inmate subcultures were attributed to the poor staff security arrangements primarily because “authoritarian efforts to impose control and maintain internal security tend to alienate inmates
from staff and increase levels of covert inmate violence within the subculture" (Bartollas, 1978: 43). As well, Feld (1977) claimed that an inmate's defence of personal integrity was one of the most significant characteristics in explaining the majority of youth inmate violence. Several other characteristics were also important in distinguishing high violence from low violence institutions:

Violent behaviour is also intimately related to other norms within the inmate culture, especially the enforcement of injunctions on informing. Just as organizational differences give rise to normative differences in informing, there is also considerable variation in the prevalence and intensity of violence in various cottage settings (Feld, 1977:132).

More generally, Irland (1999) argued that the foundation of prisons was based on the violent principle of the “survival of the fittest.” In order to survive, the “alpha male” dominated the weaker youth to demonstrate the former’s power and status. According to Ellis and Sowers (1999), another instrumental principle was that violence was used in order to either obtain a favour or to deal with a problem between inmates. In effect, a review of the bullying and prison victimization literature provides support for both the Importation and Deprivation models. However, the research literature also highlights several of the key variables associated with perceptions of institutional violence and perceptions of safety. Another important set of factors that aggravate and mitigate perceptions of violence and safety are psychological deficits and mental disorders.

**Psychological Deficits and Mental Disorders**

There is considerable evidence that the structure and culture of youth prisons facilitates increased psychological problems (Cesaroni and Badali, 2003;
Kilbourne and McVicker, 1999). In effect, prison structures have been associated with increased emotional distress and anxiety among youth. In turn, for some youth, such heightened levels of anxiety leads to decreased perceptions of safety among youth incarcerated in custodial institutions. Research by Kilbourne and McVicker (1999) claimed that incarcerated youth typically learned to suppress feelings and often refrained from displaying normal emotions as these displays are considered signs of weakness and vulnerability. This hardening occurs partly because youth are constantly exposed only to other criminal inmates and, therefore, newly incarcerated youth are deprived of positive role models. As well, the rigid authoritarian structure of daily prison life deprives youth of the experiences of making their own decisions. Both of these occurrences can lead to increased levels of anxiety and fear.

For many youth, violence in prison was very similar to their experiences before being incarcerated. For those youth who came from families or neighbourhoods where violence was commonplace, learning to adapt to the level of violence in the institution may not have been very difficult or frightening. In other words, some youth were likely to be less intimidated by any kind of authority and, instead would more likely respond to a violent environment with violence rather than fear. In effect, according to the Importation model, violence is the primary means of expressing frustrated thoughts and/or feelings (Kilbourne and McVicker, 1999). While there has been considerable theorizing about why certain types of youth engage in violence in the prison context, far less is known about why certain youth are more vulnerable to being victimized by this violence.
Expanding on the issues raised previously with respect to inmate victimization within the adolescent population, being victimized results in youth suffering from low self-esteem, depression, loneliness, and anxiety. In contrast, however, McCorkle (1993) and Maitland and Sluder (1996) reported that, within the offender population, the fear of being victimized was a strong predictor of psychophysiological well-being. In other words, a general fear of being victimized in prison was a “healthy” fear recognizing the potential for violence in a custody facility. Similar to their non-offending counterparts, Cesaroni and Badali (2003) stated that incarcerated young offenders with a low sense of personal safety reported more adjustment problems and a substantial concern for their overall well-being in prison.

There are several distinctive aspects of prison life that appear to be associated with this central relationship between fear of being victimized and general well-being. Gibbs (1982), for example, conducted a study on stress in custody and found that forming group associations with other youth often assisted in alleviating many of the stressors that coincided with institutional life. Furthermore, Canadian researchers also reported that prison peer groups had a fundamental role in decreasing stress levels in youth facilities (Cesaroni and Badali, 2003). These researchers analysed the effects of peer relations on young offenders' functioning and found that social isolation had a strong negative impact on a youth's overall well-being. Most critically, youth assumed that friends would lend support to one another if problems arose. This dependence on peers was viewed as even more important in the positive psychosocial adjustment of
youth to custody. Yet, developing and sustaining friendships was seen as inherently difficult within prison contexts because these institutions were characterized by conflict and instability. For example, arguments, aggressive and impulsive behaviour, lack of empathy, and hierarchal role structures are prevalent among delinquent youth peer groups in comparison to non-delinquent peer groups (Cesaroni and Badali, 2003).

Despite the growing body of research in developmental psychopathology on risk factors for criminality in childhood and adolescence, there is very little research on the relationship between these risk factors and the adjustment of youth to life in custody (Loeber and Farrington, 1998; Biggam and Power 1999; Maitland and Sluder 1996). As reported above, Maitland and Sluder (1996) provided a more in-depth study of the well-being of young offender inmates and related institutional, social, and psychological variables, such as victimization experiences, fear of victimization, prison support, and correctional experience. Moreover, this research provided important evidence regarding the influence of institutional risk, social relations, and social skills on the adjustment of youth in prison. Nonetheless, Maitland and Sluder (1996) and other researchers, did not incorporate many of the importation variables regarding pre-existing vulnerabilities (Cesaroni and Badali, 2003). For example, Gover (2000) examined the relationship between adjustment within custodial institutions specifically in terms of how pre-existing factors were linked to violence and the risk of victimization. Martin, Sigda, and Kupersmidts (1998) investigated the association of family and neighbourhood violence on depressive symptomology.
among incarcerated youth. This research indicated that several imported factors were individually related to psychosocial adjustment. While there have been a few studies that linked both imported variables and institutional variables, there are even fewer studies that examined, in more detail, the potentially large range of individual level, group level, and institutional factors evident in the developmental literature regarding how youth adapt to stressful contexts, especially prison.

**Psychological Problems and Disabilities**

The prevalence of mental health disorders among youth in custody was reported to be very high (Corrado et al., 2000; Loeber and Farrington, 1998). The most common disorders included unipolar and bipolar depression, conduct disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, separation anxiety disorder, and alcohol dependence (Cesaroni and Badali, 2003). In comparison to the general population, the degree of behavioural, emotional, personality, and psychophysiological disorders among incarcerated youth was substantially higher. Some research reported that 60% of youth had mental disorders (Cesaroni and Badali, 2003). However, prevalence rates varied considerably among studies (Cesaroni and Badali, 2003). Nonetheless, when compared to community samples, prevalence appeared to be almost four times higher among young offenders (Cesaroni and Badali, 2003).

Learning disabilities were also prevalent among youth in custody, with rates as high as 75% (Connell and Farrington, 1996; Cesaroni and Badali, 2003). In addition, many youth have had contact with the child welfare system prior to
their incarceration experience and these family hardships likely played a role in a youth's ability to adapt to prison stressors, including violence and safety (Doob, Marinos, & Varma, 1995). Most critically, nearly all incarcerated youth have experienced some form of physical or sexual abuse, substance abuse among family members, family break-up, and violence between parents (Bortner and Williams, 1997; Corrado et al., 1992; Odgers, 2001; Bell, 2002; Ellis and Sowers, 1999). Familial, socio-emotional, and academic disadvantage were also reported problems (Bortner and Williams, 1997; Connell and Farrington, 1996; Corrado and Cohen, 2002).

In particular, as discussed earlier, self-harming behaviour and suicide among incarcerated young offenders is a major concern (Biggam and Power, 1999; Odgers, 2001; Ellis and Sowers, 1999). Biggam and Power (1999) reported that the highest staff priority in Scottish and English prisons was the rising numbers of inmate suicides, particularly among young offenders. Biggam and Power identified acute psychological distress and weak problem-solving abilities in a group of incarcerated young offenders who displayed difficulties with prison adjustment, as leading factors associated with heightened risk for inmate suicide. In this study, researchers also examined the impact of the prison structure and culture, such as being the victim of bullying, depression, living in a protected area, and rigid rules. The highest levels of hopelessness were found among victims of bullying and not among inmates who had previously displayed parasuicidal behaviour (Biggam and Power, 1999).
In addition to suicide, there were other psychological problems and disabilities that characterized incarcerated young offenders. It has often been suggested by researchers that vulnerable inmates had avoidant and maladaptive problem solving skills (Wooldredge, 1999). Similarly, Toch (1977) stated that youth with poor problem solving abilities often depended on others as a means for coping with their problems. This research found that increased psychological distress was correlated with certain deficits in problem-solving abilities. In a study of adult inmates, Wooldredge (1999) further argued that the ability to mentally cope with the deprivations resulting from confinement in prison had critical implications for the reduction of violence among inmates who suffered anxiety and depression. Most importantly, regarding the central hypothesis of this thesis, social interactions were difficult for inmates who felt “unsafe.” As well, these inmates were more likely to become angry and disagreeable when they perceived restricted opportunities for self-improvement (Wooldredge, 1999).

Toch (1977) identified eight central institutional concerns for prison inmates: (1) privacy; (2) safety; (3) structure; (4) support; (5) emotional feedback; (6) social stimulation; (7) activity; and (8) freedom. In order to compare the different sources of stressors, Wright (1985) used Toch's data to confirm that two dimensions, external and internal stressors, were evident in adjustment. Wright (1985) found that internal problems were present among inmates who felt less safe, perceived less privacy, and had fewer opportunities for social interaction.

In referring to the above research by Toch and Wright, Wooldredge (1999) argued that certain characteristics also impacted an individuals' overall
adjustment to prison life. Wooldredge referred to overall adjustment in terms of psychological well-being or as "reflecting inmate perceptions of insecurity, stress, depression, anger, low self-esteem, and loneliness during incarceration" (1999: 238). Factors such as age, marital status, and race were reported to strongly influence psychological adjustment. However, adjustment also depended on the environmental deprivations of prisons and the importation of pre-institutional characteristics (Wooldredge, 1999). Mutchnick and Fawcett (1990) supported this combination of imported and institutional factors. They claimed that pre-prison socialization experiences conditioned responses to violence, while the prison environment strongly affected the attitudes that young offenders held towards violence.

Nevertheless, there was considerable evidence that imported factors were likely more important in how inmates perceived levels of violence and its relationship to perceived levels of safety. For example, older, married Caucasian inmates with higher levels of education and fewer prior offences were more likely to find their psychological adjustment to prison difficult (Wooldredge, 1999). The hypothesis was that individuals with this imported profile were fundamentally different than the typical inmate profile. In effect, the former, lesser criminally deviant group, were isolated in prison and, consequently, more fearful of victimization and more challenged by institutional deprivations. Similarly, time served and sentence length also affected psychological adjustment. Not surprisingly, shorter sentence lengths were less stressful, while, for certain individuals, prior time served made the inmate more aware of institutional
deprivations and threats and, therefore, adjustment for these offenders was easier than first time inmates (Wooldredge, 1999).

**Summary**

Most of the research reviewed in this chapter focused on the differential impact of prison on adults and youth. The effects of prison violence, in particular, dominated much of the U.S literature and the few Canadian studies. Historically, two dominant theories, importation and deprivation, were the theoretical basis for explaining the variable impact of violence and other prison deprivations on youth and adults. It appears that both theories remained important in understanding how youth reacted to prison.

There is a growing consensus in the literature that prisons are total institutions that impose varying degrees of deprivation on inmates. Furthermore, there are several variables that mitigate and aggravate the deprivations, including the deprivation of safety from violence. Age, gender, race/ethnicity, type of offender, and length of time in custody were among the key variables that potentially moderated the relationships between perceptions of violence and perceptions of safety. In the U.S. literature, the race/ethnicity variable dominated to a certain extent, whereas, in Canada, race/ethnicity appeared to play a lesser role. Nonetheless, it was evident from an administrative perspective that Aboriginal inmates were definitely an important concern in Canada. Gender issues were also prominent in that girls were dealt with more punitively in prison, historically, as opposed to boys. However, there is more recent evidence to suggest the opposite, at least, in Canada. A prior criminal record was important
especially because it involved the importation of prior criminal experiences and values into the prison context. Finally, age was also a factor because it was hypothesized, and somewhat empirically supported, that younger inmates were generally more vulnerable to violence and often felt less safe than older offenders.

The inherent violent structure of prisons were revealed in the high prevalence of bullying and other aggressive and violent behaviours. As well, it was evident that how prison staff reacted to the violent behaviour directly affected perceptions of youth violence and safety. In both U.S. and Canadian structures, there was evidence that staff in certain institutions appeared to encourage violence and heightened levels of fear. Also, youth reacted to the inherent violent structure, in part, according to personality and mental disorders imported into prison. Certain disorders appeared to be associated with greater frustrations and violence, while others were associated with being victimized, most tragically, including suicide.

While the research in youth prisons was limited, especially in Canada, it revealed that there were many variables, both imported into prison and those inherent within the prison institution that affected how incarcerated youth perceived institutionalised violence and their own levels of safety. A major goal of this study is to test empirically several of the conceptual relationships described in this chapter, specifically what factors affect young offenders' perceptions of personal safety from physical victimizations while in custody. To carry out this
assessment, a recent data set that provided an array of indicators of key concepts was utilized. The data set is described in the following chapter.
CHAPTER THREE:
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the current study is to examine youth’s feelings of safety in custodial institutions. A review of the literature suggested that several main themes emerged with respect to a youth’s sense of safety in custody. This study focuses on the following research questions: what is the perceived level of safety among a sample of incarcerated serious and violent young offenders in a Vancouver, B.C. custody centre?; what is the effect of key socio-demographic variables on feelings of safety?; what is the effect of several key indicators of the Importation model on feelings of safety?; what is the effect of several key indicators of the Deprivation model on feelings of safety?; and what is the effect of all of these variables on feelings of safety?

The data for this thesis was collected from the Vancouver Serious and Violent Incarcerated Young Offenders Study (VYOS). The primary purpose of this six year study was to evaluate the impact of incarceration on young offenders, particularly in relation to their decisions to recidivate. The project was conducted at two open and two secured custody centers in British Columbia. The main differences between the two levels of custody are the levels of security, program availability, and options for community-based programming. For example, youth serving time in open custody benefited more from programming that allowed them to go outside of the custodial institution, as well as greater

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1 This research was supported by two Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada grants awarded to Dr. Raymond R. Corrado in the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University.
levels of freedom within the institution. In total, 573 youth agreed to participate in the larger study of which 200 young offenders provided information on the dependent and all of the independent variables included in this current study. All interviews were conducted one-on-one with a semi-structured interview schedule that gathered both qualitative and quantitative data on a range of issues, such as offence history, education, employment, family history, education, drug and alcohol use/abuse, mental health issues, and general and specific attitudes towards the criminal justice system.

In addition to participating in an interview, all youth had their institutional files coded to provide additional information and to allow the researchers to cross-reference the information provided by respondents. Typically, these files included: (1) a pre-disposition report outlining the youth's educational, social, family, peer, substance use, and correctional history; (2) psychological reports that included the mental health profiles of the youth and psychological test scores; (3) institutional reports examining the behaviour of the youth while in custody; and (4) provincial case files that listed the youth's offending and disposition data.

**Study Design**

A sample of 200 incarcerated serious and violent young offenders were interviewed as part of the *Vancouver Serious and Violent Incarcerated Young Offenders Study* (VYOS). Youth included in this study were between the ages of 12 – 18 years old and currently serving a period of incarceration under the now replaced Young Offenders Act (YOA). During the interview, participants were
asked a series of questions relating to their experiences with the youth criminal justice system, their level of education, their social and family experiences, and their attitudes towards their most recent offence and incarceration. Most important and relevant to this thesis were the various indicators selected from the questionnaire that measured the concepts of importation and deprivation of custody violence and feelings of safety. In order to better understand the dependent variable, sense of personal safety from victimization while in custody, it is important to consider the research literature on the related concept of fear of crime.

The literature on the fear of crime is overwhelmingly complex as it is a multi-dimensional concept characterized by important measurement issues. Given the few studies on the issue of fear in prisons, it is important to present a detailed analysis of these relevant articles in order to better understand the theoretical relationship between the fear concept and perceptions of safety in juvenile detention institutions. A useful starting point when considering these issues is an article entitled “The Measurement of Fear of Crime” by Ferraro and LaGrange (1987). They begin their conceptual review with the central assertion that “fear of crime is almost never explicitly defined by researchers; their measurements suggest that such fear is implicitly defined as the perception of the probability of being victimized” (1987: 71). For the purpose of this thesis then, it is very important to understand how safety is conceptualized before specifically identifying this concept with the probability of youth being victimized in a custodial setting.
There are several dimensions of crime perceptions that encompass the "fear of crime" concept, and these dimensions range along a continuum from cognitive (judgments of risk and safety) to affective (fear reactions) (See Table 1).

**Table 1: Classification of Crime Perceptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of reference</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Affective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td><strong>Judgments</strong></td>
<td><strong>Values</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Risk to others;</td>
<td>B. Concern about crime to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>crime or safety assessments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>D. Risk to self;</td>
<td>E. Concern about crime to self;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>safety of self</td>
<td>personal intolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Concern about crime to</td>
<td>C. Fear for other's victimization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self; personal intolerance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F. Fear for self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>victimization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Ferraro and LaGrange 1987: 72

Regarding the cognitive end of the continuum, Ferraro and LaGrange asserted that individuals were capable of anticipating danger in a specific environment for others and themselves and, therefore, they could estimate the potential risk (section A in Table 1). This decision making dynamic involved the following process: as one's risk was heightened, the likelihood of monitoring the immediate environment increased, ultimately preparing for a fight or flight situation. In other words, it could be argued that youth in prison are capable of anticipating the potential risk of victimization, and, therefore, are able to predict their personal safety. Furthermore, it was also argued that a familiarity and knowledge of the environment also affected the risk estimate and the corresponding levels of safety. For example, constant exposure to a specific environment (i.e. prison), where violence is regarded as normal, might lower one's levels of fear and/or perceptions of safety based on the simple familiarity with that environment. As well, depending on the perceiver's personal
characteristics, such as age, gender, physicality, prior experiences with violence, or ethnicity, their safety estimates would likely vary. For example, a 17 year old, powerfully built, mesomorphic male, who was an experienced and feared fighter, might perceive his personal safety as far less threatened at any level of perceived violence compared to a 13 year old, physically weak, endomorphic male, who had a history of being bullied. As such, it is necessary to understand both the relationship and differences that exist between judgments of risk and fear of crime. Ferraro and LaGrange contended that, although fear was influenced by judgments of risk, it was not automatic that "when one measures judgments or risk that one is measuring fear of crime" (1987: 73). Yet, depending on the perceived likelihood of victimization, it can be argued that cognitive judgments pertaining to perceived levels of safety generally have an affect on one's perceptions of fear. In other words, higher perceptions of violence are generally associated with higher perceptions of fear or, conversely, lower levels of safety.

In effect, one can view fear and safety as opposite reactions to the same phenomena, i.e. a reaction to a threat. Typically, it would be expected that as fear increases, safety automatically decreases, and vice versa. While they are opposite emotional phenomena, in regards to violence, they are strongly and inversely correlated reactions. One could argue that this relationship pattern would be especially expected in a prison context given the general expectation that the threat of violence is not uncommon.
In addition to the above conceptual complexity of the “fear of crime” definitional model presented in Table 1, Ferraro and La Grange maintained that the empirical research on crime and fear is beset with measurement problems. Most importantly are the inconsistencies and problems associated with both single and multiple item indicators when measuring fear of crime (Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987). They asserted that, when operationalizing theoretical concepts, such as fear of crime, multiple-item indicators were normally preferred even though this approach also had validity issues. Unless properly constructed and tested, the composite indices or measurement scales might lack the necessary psychometric properties required to establish their conceptual validity.

To illustrate this validity concern, Ferraro and LaGrange (1987) reviewed the most frequently utilized measures of fear of crime, such as the measure used in the National Crime Survey, “How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighborhood at night? (1987: 77). Several problems are associated with this type of question, most critically, the failure to differentiate between objective risk judgments and emotional fears of crime. Furthermore, Ferraro and LaGrange claimed that it was important to clearly differentiate between the cognitive and emotional dimensions of the fear of crime. Garofalo (as cited in Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987) identified four fundamental problems with the specific question used in the National Crime Survey: (1) the word crime is not mentioned; (2) “neighborhood” has different meanings to people; (3) survey respondents are asked to reflect on their perceived levels of safety when alone at night in their neighborhood when being alone at night is an unlikely occurrence.
for most people; and (4) the part of the question that asks 'do you or would you" mixes actual with hypothetical assessments of safety.

Another more recent and commonly employed single-item indicator of fear of crime is the following “Is there anywhere right around here that is within a mile, where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?” (Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987: 77). This question attempts to shift away from judgmental, objective assessments of one's personal risk of victimization to focus more on the issue of fear. This shift is evident with the inclusion of the phrase “being afraid” and excluding the word “safety.” Nevertheless, Ferraro and LaGrange (1987) still maintained that this question did not avoid all of the issues raised above.

A central conceptual issue concerning the fear of crime is the relationship between the fear dimension as an affective reaction to a perceived threat and the objective reaction about one's assessment of safety in reaction to the threat. Theoretically, as discussed above, the expectation is that these two dimensions are inversely and casually related, i.e. the greater the fear, the lower the assessment of safety. However, Lee (1982) only found significant correlations between a fear of crime measure (i.e. emotion) and safety/risk assessments of the community (i.e. judgment) ranging between .32 and .48. In effect, there was only a moderate relationship between perceived fear of crime and the assessment of safety/risk from crime (as cited in Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987).

As also mentioned above, any assessment of fear of crime occurs in a specific context; certain contexts are obviously inherently more fearful than others. Among the most fearful are prisons. Maitland and Sluder (1996)
assessed many of the variables associated with inmates' sense of well-being, safety, and fear in prison. They identified inmate fears of being a victim in prison as having the strongest bivariate correlation \((r = .62)\) with inmates' general mental health. The second strongest bivariate correlation was victimization experiences \((r = .49)\) (Maitland and Sluder, 1996). In summarizing their bivariate analysis, Maitland and Sluder stated that inmates who were best able to adapt to the prison environment:

- had few victimization experiences,
- had less fear of being victimized,
- had social support systems in place in the prison,
- more frequently attended religious services,
- were able to cope better with the pains of imprisonment,
- had lower levels of anomie,
- were classified as "aggressors," and
- ironically, were affiliated with some form of gang (1996: 4).

In order to assess whether the two key independent variables of fear of victimization and victimization experiences retained their strong relationships with a sense of well-being, Maitland and Sluder (1996) included an additional seven independent variables in a multiple regression model involving key themes evident in the literature on both protective and threat factors in a prison context. Both the fear of victimization \((r = -.34)\) and "victimization experiences" \((r = -.33)\) remained important predictors.

In contrast, for example, the general concept of "prison stressors" was not correlated with "general well-being." In effect, the fear of victimization was an important and consistent component of the adult prison context in the United States. There is no doubt, therefore, that the structure and the culture of prisons affected the dependant variable examined in this thesis, that is perceptions of safety in custody. Not surprisingly, the constant stress of being victimized was
correlated with significant psychophysiological disturbances for inmates. Similar research by McCorkle (1993), to be discussed in greater detail below, also confirmed that fearful inmates “experience a multitude of psychophysiological disturbances” (Maitland and Sluder, 1996: 2). These inmates often had more difficulty focusing on their daily prison routine, were more likely than non-fearful inmates to report physical health problems, and expressed concerns regarding their overall well-being.

Reinforcing this connection is the research by O'Donnell and Edgar (1999). They concluded that fear in prison was related to the experience of being victimized. They hypothesized further that victimization was considered routine in a penal setting, and that it was not just direct criminal victimization that produced fear in inmates, but also witnessing a victimization, a direct experience of incivility, or behaviour that may not necessarily be criminal, but considered socially disruptive and personally upsetting. Nonetheless, two thirds of inmates stated that they felt safe from insults and/or being hurt or injured while in custody. However, consistent with previous studies, inmates who reported a direct experience with victimization reported feeling much less safe (O'Donnell and Edgar, 1999).

In addition, O'Donnell and Edgar (1999) found a strong correlation between recent victimization and self reported fear. In other words, those who had been recently assaulted felt less safe than those who had not been recently victimized. In contrast, the relationship between fear and vicarious victimization was not statistically significant. Therefore, witnessing a victimization did not
appear to be related to inmates' overall perceptions of safety. Again, it is important to note that most of the major studies on the relationship between perceptions of violence and safety/fear involved adult offenders. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, far less is known about this relationship among incarcerated young offenders.

The dependent variable in this thesis was the youth's feelings of personal safety from physical harm within the custody centre. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it can be argued that the safety dimension is more straightforward to operationalize than the fear dimension. Safety essentially involves an assessment of risk of being victimized, while fear consists of more complicated emotional reactions to real or potential violence threats. A single operational indicator was employed for the dependent variable of safety. Each youth was asked to respond to the following question: "I feel safe from being physically assaulted by residents in this institution." This indicator was measured on a five point Likert scale anchored by "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

As discussed above, the two main approaches to understand violence in custody are the Importation model and the Deprivation model. Each of these models were operationalized by a series of questions posed to each young offender in the sample. Two indicators of deprivation were used. First, youth were asked four Likert scale questions, anchored by "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", designed to assess their perceptions of violence within the institution. An index of perceived institutional violence was constructed by summary responses to these four questions: (1) The number of heated
arguments is a problem in this institution; (2) Too many residents have objects that they intend to use as weapons in this institution; (3) The number of assaults among residents are a problem in this institution; and (4) The number of assaults with weapons are a problem in this institution. Total scores ranged from 4 (no perceived institutional violence) to 20 (extremely high levels of perceived institutional violence). The internal reliability of this index, as estimated by Cronbach’s Alpha is .69. Second, youth were asked whether they were currently serving their period of incarceration in an open or secure custody facility, scored 0 for open custody and 1 for secure custody.

The Importation model was operationalized by four independent variables. These variables were: (1) whether or not the offender had ever been convicted of a violent offence (violent offender = 1, non-violent offender = 0); (2) total amount of time the offender had spent in custody prior to their most recent conviction (never been in custody = 1, one to thirty days in custody = 2, thirty-one to ninety days in custody = 3, and ninety-one or more days in custody = 4); (3) victim of physical abuse (yes = 1, no = 0); (4) hard drug user (yes = 1, no = 0).

Three socio-demographic variables were used as controlling variables; (1) Gender (male = 1, female = 0); (2) Age was categorized into three subgroups, 12-14 year olds, 15 and 16 year olds, and those 17 years old and older; and (3) Race (Aboriginal = 1, non-Aboriginal = 0).

The analysis in this chapter was conducted in three stages. Stage one involved a descriptive analysis of each variable in this study. Bivariate relationships between the independent variables and the dependant variable
were estimated in the second stage. In the final stage of the analysis, multiple regression models were estimated that assessed the magnitude of contribution of the independent variables, individually and collectively, toward explaining feelings of safety.
CHAPTER FOUR: 
RESULTS

Socio-Demographic Variables

As discussed in the methodology, three key socio-demographic variables were analysed for this thesis (see Table 2). The proportion of youth for each of these variables in the current sample were similar to the larger sample of 573 incarcerated young offenders\(^2\). As expected based on the research literature, males constituted more than four-fifths (82.5\%) of the current sample. This gender distribution was consistent with most previous studies of serious and violent young offenders where males overwhelmingly predominate (Loeber and Farrington, 2000). Nonetheless, the near one fifth (17.5\%) of the sample who were female constituted a substantial proportion.

Table 2: General Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N = 200</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-14 years Old</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-16 years Old</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17+ years Old</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^2\) In the larger sample (n= 573) 75.3\% were male, 21.0\% were Aboriginal, and 10.5\% were 12-14 years old, 46\% were 15-16 years old, and 43.5\% were 17+ years old.
The age profile was also not surprising since the YOA discouraged the use of custody for younger offenders between 12 and 14 years old. Still, the approximately ten percent of the sample in the younger age category was sufficient to allow for the ordinal profiling of the age variable and its inclusion in the various statistical analyses. The most prevalent age group (17 years old and older) involved close to half (48.0%) of the sample (see Table 2). Typically, it would have been anticipated that the oldest age group would be disproportionately represented partly because these youth have had more time at risk for recidivism. Moreover, under the YOA, prison records were considered to be an important aggravating condition for sentencing. In effect, judges would more likely sentence youth to custodial sentences for multiple non-violent convictions because such records could be viewed as requiring society to be better protected from “career” type young offenders.

Regarding the final socio-demographic variable, ethnicity, nearly one quarter (23.0%) of the sample consisted of Aboriginal youth (see Table 2). Again, this number of incarcerated Aboriginal youth was overwhelmingly disproportionate to the estimated proportion of Aboriginal youth (2%) within the general youth population (Corrado and Cohen, 2002). The large number of Aboriginal youth in this sample, however, allowed for this variable to be utilized to an assessment of the independent effect of ethnicity on feelings of safety.

In terms of the offence(s) which resulted in the sample’s current incarceration, nearly half of the sample (44.5%) were in custody for violent offences, slightly more than one third (35%) for property offences, and slightly
less than one fifth (19%) for administrative offences, such as breaches or escapes (see Table 3). Considering just those offenders who were incarcerated for a violent offence, more than half (53.9%) were for assault.

Table 3: Offences Related to Most Current Incarceration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>N = 200</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Offences</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assaults</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Offences</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Offences</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violations of the Administration of Justice</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deprivation Variables

Based on the offence profile of the sample, it was not unexpected that a majority of offenders (55.5%) were sentenced to secure custody and 44.5% were sentenced to open custody. Despite the seriousness typically associated with violent offenders, the average sentence length for the sample’s most recent offence was around three months (93.9 days). In fact, offenders convicted of a violent offence, on average, were sentenced to only slightly longer periods of incarceration (92.7 days) compared to those convicted of a non-violent offence (81.1 days). Moreover, the length of sentences varied for those sentenced to secure versus open custody. Specifically, youth sentenced to closed custody received, on average, slightly more than one month (36.5 days) longer in custody
than those sentenced to open custody (143.3 days secure custody vs. 106.8 days open custody).

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, perceptions of institutional violence were assessed by summing the scores on four Likert scale questions. A univariate analysis suggests that the sample perceived a moderate level of institutional violence (see Table 4). In effect, the sample was skewed towards a higher level of perceived institutional violence.

Table 4: Univariate Distribution of Perceptions of Violence in Custody

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Low Levels of Perceived Institutional Violence</th>
<th>N = 200</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 8</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 – 12</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 – 16</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 – 20</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extremely High Levels of Perceived Institutional Violence

Importation Variables

Considering the sample's lifetime offending profile, slightly more than half of the youth (54%) had never been convicted of a violent offence (see Table 5). As mentioned above, one of the major criticisms of the YOA was that custody was used for less serious, non-violent offenders. Given this, it was not unexpected that only 46% of the sample could be defined as a violent offender. While approximately half (48.0%) of the non-Aboriginal young offenders could be
classified as violent offenders, a smaller proportion (39.0%) of Aboriginal youth were defined as such.

Table 5: Lifetime Offender Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offender Type</th>
<th>N=200</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Violent</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Lifetime Number of Days Spent in Custody</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Days</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 30 Days</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 90 Days</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 Days or More</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As described in Table 5, nearly half of the sample (43%) had never been sentenced to custody prior to their most recent conviction and nearly one fifth (17.5%) had previously spent one month or less in custody. However, nearly one third of the young offenders (29%) had spent at least three months in a youth custody facility prior to their most recent conviction.

With respect to physical abuse, more than one third of the sample (37.9%) reported that they had been physically abused (see Table 6). As expected from the research literature, a greater proportion of females (51.4%) than males (34.5%) indicated being physically abused in the community. Also expected, nearly the entire sample (94.6%) reported using marijuana. However, considering only hard drug use, such as cocaine, crack, and heroin, while nearly two thirds of
the sample reported using hard drugs, slightly more females (68.6%) than males (60%) indicated that they used these kinds of drugs (see Table 6).

Table 6: Youth's Problem Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N=200</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victim of Physical Abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Drug Use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the dependent variable, feelings of personal safety from being physically assaulted by other residents, the mean score for the sample was 3.9 out of 5, indicating that most incarcerated youth felt somewhat safe in their prison context. As demonstrated in Table 7, more than one-third of the sample felt very safe, while only seven percent stated that they felt very unsafe. Combined with those who indicated that they felt unsafe, only 18.6% expressed any concern for their personal safety while in custody. In contrast, more than two-thirds (69%) of the sample took the opposite view reporting that they felt generally safe from physical assaults while incarcerated.
Table 7: Univariate Distributions of Perceptions of Physical Safety While in Custody

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings of Personal Safety:</th>
<th>N=200</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Safe</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Safe</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Safe nor Unsafe</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Unsafe</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unsafe</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that the pattern of feelings of safety was in contrast with the univariate distribution of perceptions of violence. In other words, while young offenders perceive moderate levels of institutional violence, they, in general, still feel somewhat safe from being physically assaulted by other residents while in custody. This conclusion was supported by the moderate -.31 zero order correlation (statistically significant at the .001 level) relationship between the independent variable of perceptions of institutional violence and the dependant variable of feelings of safety.

In terms of the mean safety scores of the sample by each of the independent variables, there was very little variation within variables, and none of the variations were statistically significant (see Table 8). It is interesting to note that those youth who had previously spent 31 – 90 days in custody felt the most safe, however, their mean score was not substantially different from those who had never been in custody.
## Table 8: Feelings of Safety by the Independent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Feelings of Safety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>(n = 165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>(n = 35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – 14</td>
<td>(n = 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 – 16</td>
<td>(n = 85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 +</td>
<td>(n = 96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>(n = 46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>(n = 154)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Offender:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>(n = 92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Violent</td>
<td>(n = 108)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Time in Custody:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 Days</td>
<td>(n = 86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 30 Days</td>
<td>(n = 35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 90 Days</td>
<td>(n = 21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 + Days</td>
<td>(n = 58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physically Abused:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>(n = 125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>(n = 75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hard Drug Use:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>(n = 77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>(n = 123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Custodial Disposition:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Custody</td>
<td>(n = 95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure Custody</td>
<td>(n = 105)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to further examine the effect of the independent variables on feelings of safety, a four stage hierarchal multiple regression analysis was undertaken (see Table 9). In Equation 1, the three demographic control variables of gender, age, and Aboriginal identity were introduced. None of the variables were statistically significant. Equation 2 introduced the control variables and the variables associated with the Deprivation model. While there was no relationship between whether the youth was currently in open or secure custody, there was a significant relationship between perceptions of institutional violent and feelings of safety (-.306, p = .000). In other words, higher perceptions of institutional violence had a statistically significant effect on reducing a youth’s sense of safety in custody.

Equation 3 introduced the control variables and the variables associated with the Importation model. Somewhat surprisingly, there was no significant relationship between whether the offender was the victim of physical abuse, the type of offender the youth was (violent or non-violent), how long they had previously been in custody, whether they used hard drugs, and decreased feelings of personal safety. Equation 4 introduced all of the independent variables. Again, the only significant relationship with decreased feelings of safety while in custody was the youth’s perceived level of institutional violence (-.306, p = .000). No other relationship approached an acceptable level of statistical significance. In other words, perceptions of institutional violence emerged as the most important predictor of perceptions of safety in custody (see Table 9).
Table 9: Multiple Regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>Equation 1</th>
<th>Equation 2</th>
<th>Equation 3</th>
<th>Equation 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-Demographic Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male = 1)</td>
<td>-.277 (.240)</td>
<td>-.083</td>
<td>-.166 (.230)</td>
<td>-.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.153 (.141)</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.174 (.136)</td>
<td>.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (Aboriginal = 1)</td>
<td>-.237 (.215)</td>
<td>-.079</td>
<td>-.227 (.206)</td>
<td>-.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deprivation model Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Custody (secure = 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Institutional Violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Importation model Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Physical Abuse (yes = 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Offender (violent = 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days in Custody</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Drug Use (yes = 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.747</td>
<td>4.967</td>
<td>3.635</td>
<td>4.773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.089</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

β = unstandardized regression coefficient with standard error in parentheses; Beta = standardized regression coefficient.

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001 (two-tailed tests).
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The research literature provides substantial support for the notion that prisons, especially those in the United States, are violent contexts in which inmates fear being victimized (O'Donnell and Edgar, 1999). However, research has not adequately demonstrated how perceived levels of institutional violence are related to a youth's overall sense of safety while in custody. This thesis explored the levels of safety perceived by incarcerated young offenders in a Canadian custodial institution. The results of this thesis suggested that a significant variable that affects a youth's perceived level of personal safety is their perceived level of institutional violence. Notwithstanding this finding, it is important to recognize that this sample of young offenders, for the most part, felt somewhat safe in custody, while recognizing that the institution was somewhat violent. In effect, in the Canadian context, the paucity of research focusing on inmates' levels of safety may be due, in part, to the recognition that Canadian youth custody facilities are not especially violent. However, in U.S. prisons, the value of addressing safety issues would be beneficial given that these custody institutions are often gang dominated with higher levels of institutional violence (Joseph, 1995; Giles, 2000).

In support of the notion that Canadian youth prisons are not extremely violent, and to further explain the finding that youth felt somewhat safe while identifying the institution as moderately violent, part of the Vancouver Serious
and Violent Incarcerated Young Offenders Study included a review of the youth's institutional file. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, part of this review included the daily progress reports completed by the staff on each youth which outlined any behavioural alerts or serious incidents. For the overwhelming majority of young offenders, the files recorded only minor alerts, such as not following staff direction, slow to follow rules, or acting out. Indications of more serious or violent acts were most often characterised as incidents of pushing, shoving, bullying, or intimidation. Notations of extremely violent acts or acts resulting in charges being laid were rare in this custodial context. Given this, it was not surprising that youth in this institution felt moderate to high levels of safety.

The demographic profile of this sample of incarcerated young offenders in British Columbia's largest youth custody centre, in terms of age and gender, was consistent with previous Canadian research, and in accordance with both the YOA sentencing policies and British Columbia's youth justice sentencing policies regarding the types of young offenders who should be incarcerated. Theoretically, males have always been considered to be more criminally prone because of their inherent aggressiveness (Moffitt et al., 2001) and their greater propensity to belong to social groups, such as informal and formal gangs, that engage in serious and/or violent crimes (Loeber and Farrington, 1999). American research also confirmed that overwhelmingly males dominate juvenile and adult prison populations (Bartollas 1978; Feld, 1977). Again, in certain states, inner-city youth gangs, such as the Afro-American Bloods and Crips, were
reconstituted within the state juvenile custodial institutions. However, more recent theoretical and research trends indicate the more substantial involvement of females in serious and violent crime. To some degree, this was evident in this thesis as girls constituted nearly one fifth of the sample.

Race and ethnicity have dominated explanations of the relationship between violence and fear in the U.S. literature both for adults and youth. To a lesser degree, this has been hypothesized to be increasingly the situation in Canada, specifically regarding the disproportionate prevalence of incarcerated Aboriginal youth. With nearly one quarter of the sample self-identifying as Aboriginal, this disproportionately was most definitely evident in this sample of incarcerated young offenders.

The YOA stipulated that custody sentences were to be reserved for the most serious criminal offences, particularly violent crimes. However, less than half of the sample were most recently incarcerated for a violent offence, while there were a substantial number of youth sentenced to custody for administrative violations or property offences. It is important to note that the YOA was criticized for inappropriately utilizing custodial sentences for non-serious crimes (Corrado et al., 1992). In contrast, the newly implemented YCJA severely restricts the use of custody for mainly the most serious offenders or those committing the most serious offences. In part, this change was based on the view that prisons were inherently negative contexts, especially because of the pervasiveness of violence and fear.
With the above major exception of youth sentenced to custody for administrative offences, the sample of incarcerated youth in this thesis was largely consistent with the demographic offence profiles evident in the literature. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that the length of time in custody in this sample quite likely was far less than most American samples. Another important difference between this sample and the U.S. research was that, in many states, serious and violent youth are routinely or automatically transferred to adult court and, upon conviction, receive lengthy prison sentences (Feld, 1977). How these fundamental differences between Canada and the U.S. may have affected youth's perceptions of their personal safety in these two prison contexts was not obvious. Still, it seems quite likely that most U.S. based theory development regarding this core issue within youth prisons was based on a fundamentally different race/ethnic and offence history young offender profile. Most importantly, according to major American theorists, such as Bartollas (1978) and Feld, (1977) U.S prisons are very violent contexts. In contrast, the few Canadian studies, such as Doob and Cesaroni (2002), described far less systematic violence. Yet, these researchers maintained that violence was a fundamental part of the prison structures they studied.

Regarding the only independent variable in this study to have an effect on perceived levels of safety, namely perceived level of institutional violence, it appeared that violence was a central part of institutional life. The actual level of perceived violence, as defined on the 4 – 20 scale, suggested that the 11.5 mean sample score could be viewed as moderate, keeping in mind that the higher the
score, the higher the perceived level of institutional violence. This scale consisted of a variety of indicators of violence from the more serious assaults to more minor aggressive acts. One of the limitations of this scale, however, was that the different types of violence were not rank ordered, therefore, severity of violence was not constructed for this thesis. Another limitation was that the indicators of institutional violence asked respondents for their assessment of the general level of violence in the institution, rather than their perception of the level of violence directed toward themselves. Still, this moderate perception of violence in custody was further validated by participant observation experiences of the research team involved in the larger SSHRC project from which this thesis data derived. These experiences generally confirmed that aggressive behaviours and values were evident, but actual incidents of major violence were not routine. Youth most likely engaged in bullying behaviours, including shoving and occasional punching, but major acts of violence occur very infrequently. As well, unlike the Doob and Cesaroni (2002) study in Canada, and several of the U.S. studies by Feld (1977) and Bartollas (1978), there were few indicators of line-staff or management allowing, encouraging, facilitating, or participating in aggression or violence by youth or staff as either a means of controlling or punishing troublesome youth. As reported in the MacDonald (1997b) study, most youth had favourable perceptions of staff and rarely were staff viewed as encouraging aggression or participating in it against youth.

In general, the youth in this sample agreed with the statement that they felt safe from being physically assaulted by other residents. It is possible that the
moderate level of perceived institutional violence reported by the sample created a context of violence where young offenders, at a minimum, perceived the potential for being victimized. In other words, it was not surprising that at least the threat of violence was pervasive. Again, incarcerated youth had daily access to staff as well as the ability to contact parents, defence counsel, the ombuds office, and even various media if they had actually been subjected to any systemic violence on the scale reported in American studies or in the single Canadian study cited above.

Again, for example, there was no evidence of gang structures in the custody centre sampled for this thesis. However, there were common areas in this institution where groups of youth regularly congregated and, therefore, had the opportunity for bullying or serious physical violence. In other words, it is somewhat inevitable that the potential for violence would increase in common recreation and eating areas where, according to the victimization literature, aggressive encounters are most likely to occur (Mutchnick & Fawcett, 1990). Still, for those youth who engaged in violence against other youth or staff, there were serious consequences. Offenders, according to the long standing youth corrections policy, could be placed directly in a holding cell depending on the seriousness of the assault or lose the privilege of residing in an area of the institution with a lesser amount of direct supervision and control. Again, depending on the seriousness of the violence, a youth could be charged with a criminal offence and prosecuted. However, these were few such incidents noted during the data collection phase of this current research project.
While it is possible to argue that this particular custody institution did not appear to have the more extreme context of violence often identified in the American literature, the above moderate levels of perceived violence and safety suggested that many of the incarcerated youth had experienced or witnessed at least the threat of violence while in custody. This inference was confirmed by the hierarchal multiple regression analysis which lent some support to the Deprivation model. The Importation model usually emphasizes that violent prisons occur primarily because incarcerated youth import violence experiences and values. However, the beta coefficients involving type of offender, being the victim of physical abuse, hard drug use, or previous custody experiences did not support the conclusion that imported values related significantly to perceptions of personal safety from a violent victimization.

As discussed above and in Chapter One, it was possible that the Canadian youth custody context more generally, and this particular custody centre, were fundamentally different from juvenile prisons utilized in the American studies from which the Importation model derived. In effect, the Importation model's impact may be more likely to occur where youth have engaged in very violent behaviours prior to being sent to prisons. It is possible that most youth in this thesis sample were not characterized by similar levels of routine serious violence more typical of young offenders in certain major American cities where youth gangs traditionally have existed. For example, there are relatively few youth who are annually convicted of murder in Canada, the figure typically is appropriately 48 youth per year. In contrast, Block and Block (1992) reported 192
youth gang related murders in Chicago alone in one year. Again, during the period of this research project utilized for this thesis, no gang structures were evident. Also, it is important to recall that the average amount of time that these youth spent in custody was relatively short, and, consequently, the opportunity for more aggressive violent prone groups to develop within the custody centre was fundamentally reduced.

Another fundamental difference between the Canadian and U.S. custody contexts is the race/ethnicity profiles. Afro-American and Hispanic youth are vastly and disproportionately represented in the U.S. juvenile prisons (Bartollas, 1978). The youth incarcerated from these two ethnic groups often come from segregated and impoverished inner-city areas. In contrast, with the exception of Winnipeg and Manitoba, it can be argued that incarcerated Canadian youth do not come from parallel inner-city environments. More fundamentally different, the race factor in many Canadian youth custody centres involves Aboriginal youth. Most of these Aboriginal youth have migrated from rural reserves or reserves located near major or metropolitan areas. And, while some of these reserves could be characterized by similar poverty and social disorganization found in U.S. inner-city ghetto areas, the First Nation or Aboriginal contexts do not consist of the large populations and dense urban housing areas typical of many U.S. cities. (Moretti et al., 2004)

Nonetheless, there are certain parallels between historically discriminated and oppressed ethnic/racial groups in both countries. Aboriginal youth often have experienced the systemic racial discrimination, poverty, and multi-problem
profiles that have theoretically been one of the leading explanations for why
American youth prisons are so disproportionately populated by Afro-American
and Hispanic youth. However, the one-way ANOVA and multiple regression
analyses in this project did not support the conclusion that Aboriginal young
offenders have a lower sense of personal safety in custody compared to their
non-Aboriginal counterparts. This finding was not inconsistent with the
MacDonald (1997b) study which suggested that many incarcerated Aboriginal
youth experienced some discrimination by non-Aboriginal youth but that typically
it was not too serious. It is possible, therefore, that while the Aboriginal youth in
this study experienced minor racial discrimination, this form of abuse did not
affect their overall sense of personal safety from physical assaults.

No substantial gender differences were evident in the hierarchal multiple
regression analysis. Given the previous research on this sample of females, it
was not surprising that girls did not feel less safe. Corrado et al., (2000) reported
that many incarcerated girls expressed the view that the custodial sentences
occurred primarily because judges and corrections officials were trying to protect
them, rather than punish them. And, further, this was in contrast to the punitive
custodial intent for boys. In addition, because females were segregated from
boys in custody, and females were more likely to be incarcerated for less violent
offences and more status offences involving sexual immorality, it can be argued
that females are incarcerated with less serious offenders, regardless of whether
they are in open or secure custody, and, therefore, have moderate levels of
personal safety.
The absence of any substantial alternatives to the sole statistically significant relationship between perceived levels of institutional violence and sense of personal safety suggests some support for the Deprivation model. Even in the context of the legal procedural protections of the old YOA, access to adults, media, and protective staff, the prison context was characterized as having moderate levels of perceived violence which negatively affected the youth's sense of personal safety. Most importantly, those two variables were robustly if only moderately correlated.

It should be kept in mind that there were several limitations to the analyses in this study. As the research on fear of crime suggests, the use of a multi-item measure of safety would have strengthened the validity of the dependent variable. Moreover, including more variables in the operationalization of the Importation and Deprivation models would have strengthened the results. Specifically, regarding the Importation model, key independent and social variables were not included. In particular, as discussed in Chapter One, youth vary fundamentally in terms of vulnerability to violence within prison depending on mental disorders, prison bullying experiences, physical size, family problem profiles, and education. In other words, many of the variables discussed in Chapter One were not included in the statistical analyses in this thesis. Until the additional variables are included, only tentative inferences can be made about the validity of the dominant models in explaining perceived levels of safety in a custodial context.
REFERENCES


July 19, 2004

Dr. Raymond Corrado  
School of Criminology  
Simon Fraser University

Dear Dr. Corrado:

Re: A Survey of Young Offenders' Perceptions of Sentences: An Empirical Examination of the Perceptual Model and Its Linkage to Subsequent Official Offending  
(subset) Why young Offenders Return to Prison: A Longitudinal Muti-Path Perceptual and Behavioral Analysis of Serious and Violent Young Offenders 
Amendment

In response to your request dated July 15, 2004, I am pleased to approve, on behalf of the Research Ethics Board, the addition of two co-investigators, Ms. Amy Johnson and Ms. Amanda Watkinson to the above referenced Request for Ethical Approval of Research originally approved on July 8, 1997 and extended to July 31, 2003.

Ms. Johnson’s protocol entitled, “Perceptions of Personal Safety in Custody Among a Sample of Serious and Violent Incarcerated Young Offenders” is recognized and approved by you as part of your above titled protocol of which she is a co-investigator.

Sincerely,

Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director  
Office of Research Ethics

cc: Amy Johnston, Graduate Student  
I. Cohen, Research Assistant

/bjr

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