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Canada

**It's Like Jumping Out of a Plane without a Parachute:
Incarceration and Reintegration Experiences of
Provincially Sentenced Women in Atlantic Canada**

By

Jennifer Robena Bernier

Masters of Arts, Community Psychology, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2003

Honours Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, University of Ottawa, 2001

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Psychology (Community)
Wilfrid Laurier University**

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ABSTRACT

**It's Like Jumping Out of a Plane without a Parachute: Incarceration and Reintegration
Experiences of Provincially Sentenced Women in Atlantic Canada.**

Jennifer Robena Bernier, Ph.D., 2010

Wilfrid Laurier University, Department of Psychology

Women are now the fastest rising prison population in the world (Balfour & Comack, 2006). As more and more women are being incarcerated, it becomes increasingly important to understand how they experience imprisonment, as well as their transition back to the community. Scholarly work on women's incarceration and reintegration is limited. In Canada, the majority of research on reintegration, and otherwise, has focused on the federal correctional system. The goal of this study was to gain a greater understanding of the incarceration and reintegration experiences of women in the provincial correctional system. In order to achieve this goal, I conducted an inductive qualitative study, interviewing 32 women who had been incarcerated in provincial jails in Atlantic Canada.

The study showed that women's criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration are inextricably linked by a number of factors that influence women's lives. Although key elements necessary for "success" have been previously identified, existing frameworks fail to account for the complexity of women's experiences. In order to address this gap, I developed a feminist ecological framework that allowed women's experiences to be understood and addressed through a gendered lens across multiple levels. The framework highlights the importance of acknowledging that multiple individual, relational,

environmental, *and* societal forces are at play and that these factors need to be addressed simultaneously in order to better support criminalized women.

The findings suggest that the current correctional system is not working to provide women with the support they need. A contribution of this study is that it identifies the ways in which criminalized women can be better supported both in jail and in the community through improved policies, practice, and research. The study also shows that alternatives to incarceration are needed. Theoretically, the study offers community psychologists a framework that allows them to be more attentive to gender issues by applying a sex- and gender-based analysis in their examination of human behaviour from an ecological perspective.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the women who participated in the study. These women are among the most passionate, strong, and courageous women I have ever met. Having been given the opportunity to spend time with each of them has had a profound influence on me and has impacted my life in more ways than I could ever express.

As I lay upon this hard, steel bed
So many things go through my head
What it would be like?
Where have I gone?
What would have happened if I felt that I belong?
Disowned by my family
Misled by my friends
Ashamed of myself
Holds the struggles within
I should be with my children, not in a cell
I could be in heaven, not in this hell
These walls of concrete
The feel of cold
This is what happens when you get too bold
I did what I could
that I thought was right
While I lay here on these lost, lonely nights
I have so many regrets, but now to be strong
For my life it's worth it
Though my fight may be long
A lesson I've learned as time goes by
A lesson I know that will not pass me by
I know of my wrongs
I keep them inside
When it's time to release them I go on to hide
When the door's open up and I hear the key unlock the locks
I will walk through the gates
In my mind there be know doubt
That I can be me
No more trying to disguise
For I am beautiful
It comes from inside

Jody A.

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First and foremost I would like to thank each of the women who participated in this project. Without them this study would not have been possible. I am indebted to these women for their willingness to share their lives and entrusting me with their stories. I thank them for their candour in answering the sometimes difficult and personal questions during our conversations. The pain associated with their criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration experiences did not go unnoticed and I am grateful they felt comfortable enough to share their stories with me. The women who participated in this study have both inspired me and further fuelled my passion to work alongside criminalized women on social justice issues.

I am also very appreciative to the women at the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia who welcomed me with open arms as a newcomer to Halifax intent on being a volunteer at the organization. I was accepted by both the staff and women who use their services. My time there has been extremely rewarding. Throughout the past five years, their friendship, encouragement, and support have been valuable in my personal life, academic endeavours, and professional aspirations.

I was truly blessed to have had an extensive support network throughout the entire six plus years of my doctoral journey. I am appreciative of the guidance and expertise my committee provided. I am particularly grateful for the continued and never-ending support and encouragement I have received from my advisor, Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers. Richard, you have always had faith in me, even when I did not believe in myself, and for that I am forever indebted to you. As well, I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Shoshana Pollack for her support and expertise. I appreciated her commitment to trying to foster in

me a more theoretical mindset. Shoshana, I am truly in awe by the theoretical workings of your mind and hope to one day emulate the significant contributions you have made to the feminist literature on criminalized women..

I would also like to extend a heartfelt thanks to Dr. Terry Mitchell who was an integral support to me as a committee member. Terry, you are one of the only women I have met who truly tries to “walk the talk” in all aspects of your life. I look up to you as a woman first and a scholar second. You are a rare gift not normally found within the academic world. I am truly appreciative of our talks together throughout the years that usually occurred over tea and yummy food. Additionally, I am particularly grateful for the expertise that Dr. MaDonna Maidment brought to my work and whose research I admire. Donna, as an original member of my committee, the valuable insight and constructive feedback you provided me on earlier drafts of my dissertation greatly influenced my final writings.

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I would also like to extend my sincerest gratitude to my colleagues at the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, namely Dr. Barbara Clow, Linda Snyder, Nadine Chaulk, and Kathy Petite. Their daily encouragement and support since I joined the Centre has made a world of difference in my life. You were all there to cheer me on, especially during those difficult days when I did not think I had the energy to keep going. I feel blessed to work with such intelligent, compassionate, caring, and fun women. I am also grateful to be employed in an environment that engages in research, policy, and social action initiatives that explore the social factors that affect women's health and well-being.

To my friends, I extend a heartfelt thank you. I am truly blessed to have the friendships I have in my life. There are too many of you to name here, but you know who you are. I am grateful for the support you provided through the years as I grumbled and complained my way through graduate school. I thank you for always being there to listen to me, provide support and guidance, as well as to extend a much needed glass of wine and conversation during stressful times. While I have been in school, I have watched you graduate, start your careers, get engaged and married, buy your first homes, and have children (perhaps not always in that order) and you have always been there for me despite being in a very different phase of your life. We have grown together through the years and I look forward to reconnecting after I come up for air. From the bottom of my heart thank you for always being there for me.

Undoubtedly, I could not have persevered throughout my graduate studies and doctoral project without the love and support of my family, especially my parents. Mom and Dad, while you have not always been able to understand what I was going through, agree with some of the choices I have made, or see the end in sight, you were always there for me

cheering me on. There are not enough words that I can express to thank you for encouraging and inspiring me to be the woman I am today. You know I love you and feel truly blessed to share our special connection. I know you are as proud of my accomplishments as I am. This is as much your accomplishment as it is mine. Now we can finally celebrate!

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INTRODUCTION

The rate of imprisonment among women now far exceeds that of men (Balfour & Comack, 2006). As the number of women entangled within the correctional system increases, so too does the number of women who have to navigate their journey from behind jail/prison walls to the community. Given that more and more women are making their way through the process of reintegration, it is becoming increasingly important to understand how they experience their transition. Gaining a greater appreciation for the factors that facilitate or impede women's reintegration is paramount to providing women with the support they need as they make their way through the difficult re-entry process.

The vast majority of studies that examine re-entry are concerned with the tendency of individuals to become re-involved with the correctional system after being released from jail/prison. Many focus on "risk factors" for recidivism (the term used by Corrections), looking primarily at the demographic and psychological characteristics of women and men that predict who will return to custody after their release. While the majority of studies focus exclusively on the experiences of men, the literature suggests that many of the factors associated with the "risk" of reconviction are similar for women, including race, education, and age (Jones & Sims, 1997).

Recent statistics on recidivism show that almost one-third of all individuals will return to jail/prison within two years of their release (Statistics Canada, 2006). Recidivism rates are considerably lower for women (23%) than they are for men (32%). The number of individuals returning to custody is exceptionally high among Aboriginal populations (Shaw, 1994a; Statistics Canada, 2006a). Forty-five percent of Aboriginal women and men will become re-involved with the correctional system (Statistics Canada, 2006a). The

problem with only examining recidivism rates, however, is that it minimizes the complexities of criminalized women's lives; overlooking the factors outside of the control of individual women as they navigate their journey from behind jail/prison walls to the community.

Studies from the United States have shown a link between economic marginalization and the likelihood of women returning to custody (Beck & Harrison, 2001; Dennis, 2007; Greenfeld & Snell, 1999; Jones & Sims, 1997). For example, in a gender comparison study, unstable employment was identified as being a key predictor of recidivism among women, but not men (Jones & Sims, 1997). The finding that economic marginalization plays a role in women's re-involvement upon release is not surprising given that women are more likely than men to be working part-time, unemployed, reliant on inadequate income assistance payments, and the head of single-parent families (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Furthermore, even when women are employed, gender disparities in income still exist with women earning approximately 30% less than men do (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

What the recidivism research fails to address is the process women go through as they navigate the difficult transition process. Studies on re-involvement with the correctional system have a very narrow focus, ignoring the fact that multiple factors play a role in women's post-jail/post-prison lives. Additionally, by examining mainly individual and psychological characteristics and discounting the social context of women's reintegration, the onus is placed on the individual for her "success" or "failure" upon release. Furthermore, most studies that explore recidivism trends are quantitative studies that fail to take into account women's transition experiences from their own perspective.

Lack of insight into the post-jail/post-prison experiences of women has prompted studies that examined the specific needs of women as they transition from the inside out. Feminist scholars have begun to uncover the dynamic process of reintegration among women exiting the correctional system. Studies rooted in the women's own voices have shown that remaining free from further criminalization is only one of several components necessary for "successful" reintegration. These studies have made important contributions to the literature by highlighting the fact that women's transition experiences differ, depending on the personal and social resources available to them upon re-entry (O'Brien, 2001a).

There are numerous social conditions that work to facilitate or impede women's reintegration. A large proportion of women exit jail/prison with no place to live (Eaton, 1993; Maidment, 2006a; O'Brien, 2001a; Richie, 2001), few financial resources (O'Brien, 2001a; O'Brien & Harm, 2002), and little hope for securing adequate employment (O'Brien, 2001a; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; Richie, 2001). In addition, many women deal with physical and mental emotional health issues (Evans, 2006; O'Brien & Lee, 2006), as well as severe addictions that were not addressed during their period of incarceration (O'Brien, 2001a; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; Richie, 2001). Furthermore, upon re-entry, women continue to struggle with the emotional anguish associated with the loss of custody of their children that resulted from their imprisonment (Richie, 2001). Interpersonal relationships, such as those women have with their family, children, and peers, also have a dynamic impact on women's lives as they navigate their way through the difficult transition process (Eaton, 1993; O'Brien, 2001a).

Most of the literature on women's reintegration originates from the United States. Few studies have emerged focusing on women's transition from a Canadian context. Of the research that has been conducted on women's transition, the vast majority has examined the experiences of women exiting federal prisons (see Pollack, 2008), leaving much to be learned about the reintegration experiences of women returning to the community from provincial jails.

Background of the Study

In Canada, a dual correctional system exists that divides responsibility for corrections between the federal government and the provinces. Women receiving a sentence of up to two years less a day fall under the care of provincial governments. Alternatively, women who are sentenced to two years or more fall under federal jurisdiction and are governed by Correctional Services Canada. Provincially sentenced women have felt the consequences of this divide the greatest, as their care is not under the leadership of one governing body, which has resulted in major disparities in treatment, programming, and services across different provincial jails.

As more women have become entangled within the correctional system in recent years, greater attention has been given to issues surrounding their imprisonment. A large body of scholarly work regarding the experiences of criminalized women now exists. However, most of the scholarship and research on the experiences of incarcerated women in Canada has focused upon the federal prison system with little consideration given to women in provincial corrections (Micucci & Monster, 2004). The absence of knowledge on the experiences of provincially sentenced women is surprising given that the vast majority of women in this country are incarcerated in provincial correctional facilities, not federal

prisons. In 2005, the proportion of women in provincial custody doubled that of their female federal counterparts. Women comprised 10% of the total admission to provincial custody, while only 5% of federal population were women (Statistics Canada, 2006a).

Every year, more and more women are being imprisoned (see Appendix 1). In 2004, approximately 7,919 women were sentenced to a jail/prison term, up from 7,284 in 2000 (Statistics Canada, 2005a). From 2003 to 2006, the number of admissions for women in provincial corrections increased 3% (Statistics Canada, 2006a). The rising number of provincially sentenced women in this country is synonymous with global trends. While incarceration rates have increased substantially for women across the board, racialized women continue to be imprisoned at faster rates (Neve & Pate, 2005; Sudbury, 2005). In the Canadian context, Aboriginal populations continue to be disproportionately represented across both levels of correctional responsibility (Correctional Service Canada, 2002; Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario, 2003; Shaw, 1994a; Statistics Canada, 2001). While 3% of Canada's total population is Aboriginal, they account for 29% of women in federal prisons and almost one-third of the total number of women in provincial custody (Statistics Canada, 2006).

As the number of women sentenced to provincial custody has increased over the past decade, so too has the proportion of women returning to custody. While statistics suggest that women are less likely to become re-involved with the correctional system, recent studies have shown that exceedingly high numbers of women return to provincial custody upon release. For example, Vir Tyagi (2004) found that 79% of the 127 adult women she interviewed at two provincial jails in Ontario had previously been incarcerated and returned.

to jail after their release. Forty-four percent of those women had returned to custody within 12 months of exiting the system.

The increasing number of re-admissions to provincial custody among women is largely attributed to technical violations (Vir Tyagi, 2004). Thus, women are returning to custody not because they have committed a new offence, but because they have not been able to pay a fine or they have breached their parole/probation stipulations. The social and economic marginalization criminalized women experience makes reintegration challenging. Many women simply do not have the personal or social resources to “make it” once they are released from jail/prison and find themselves cycling in and out of the correctional system for short periods of time.

Overview of the Current Study

The lack of knowledge regarding the incarceration experiences of provincially sentenced women and their journey from behind jail walls to the community motivated me to conduct the current study. I was particularly interested in examining women’s incarceration and reintegration experiences from their perspective. In addition to learning about the experiences of provincially sentenced women in general, I set out to identify the type of supports available to women in both the provincial system and the community, as well as how the presence or absence of support affects women’s transition. Furthermore, I was curious about the role of the community in facilitating or inhibiting positive reintegration experiences among women exiting provincial jails.

In order to achieve the research objectives, I conducted an inductive qualitative study. Through individual and group interviews with 32 women across the Atlantic Region (i.e., the provinces of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince

Edward Island) it became apparent that womens' criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration experiences were inextricably linked to one another. The social, political, and racial marginalization of women impacts their transition in much of the same way as it led to their criminalization and subsequent imprisonment. The study highlighted the role individual, relational, environmental, and societal factors played in women's transition from the provincial correctional system to the community.

Rationale of the Study

Many feminist scholars have acknowledged the importance of exploring the experiences of criminalized women within the neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies that govern our society (Balfour & Comack, 2005; Bernier & Pollack, 2007; Hannah-Moffat, 2000; Maidment, 2006a). The “dramatic shift in emphasis from collective or social values towards notions of family and individual responsibility” that has occurred under the neo-liberal regime has resulted in the retraction of governmental commitments to social welfare (Comack & Balfour, 2004, p. 40). More and more, our policies and laws are in conflict with the lived realities of marginalized people in our communities, especially women (Elizabeth Fry Society, 2005). Policy initiatives under the current ideology have brought forth drastic cuts to social assistance, the creation of a precarious low-wage (gendered and racialized) job-market, a decrease in employment benefits, the reduction in publicly funded daycare, cuts to essential social services, as well as fewer addiction and mental health treatment options (Pollack, 2007a). The disadvantaged members of our communities have been hit the hardest by current socio-economic policies.

The Atlantic Region has been one of the areas of the country that have felt the consequences of the neo-liberalism regime the greatest. Drastic cuts to social support by the

government have resulted in limited resources throughout Atlantic Canada. Unemployment rates are consistently higher in the Atlantic Region than in any other part of the country (Cameron, 2003). Furthermore, welfare incomes in all four provinces do not even reach half that of the poverty line (National Council of Welfare, 2006), leaving those who rely on social assistance living in increasingly difficult economic situations. Given that more women rely on income support than men do (Statistics Canada, 2006b), women experience greater levels of economic deprivation. In Atlantic Canada, one in five women now lives in poverty (GPI Atlantic, 2001). The feminization of poverty is a significant factor in women's criminalization (Balfour & Comack, 2006; Belknap, 2001). Perhaps, then, it is no coincidence that the number of women being incarcerated in the Atlantic Region is escalating.

The less than favourable social and economic conditions that characterize Atlantic Canada were one of the reasons why I chose to examine the experiences of provincially sentenced women in the region. I was particularly interested in seeing how the social context affects women's criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration. In addition, few studies exploring the incarceration and reintegration experiences of provincially sentenced women have emerged from the region. To date, no studies have been carried out at a regional level. Another personal motive for choosing Atlantic Canada as the context of the study was that while it encompasses a large geographic area, it is a less densely populated region of the country. As a result, the number of women imprisoned in provincial jails across the region is lower than, say, that of more highly populated provinces such as Ontario. It was my hope at the onset of this project that in addressing the experiences of a

smaller population of women, recommendations that came from the study's findings might be more likely to be implemented, resulting in meaningful change for women.

Significance of the Study

The experiences of women entangled within the provincial correctional system remain relatively unknown (Boritch, 1997; Micucci & Monster, 2004; Shaw, 1994a). Only a handful of studies have emerged that focus on the experiences of criminalized women in Atlantic Canada. My study is the first of its kind to examine the incarceration and reintegration experiences of provincially sentenced women on a regional level, that is, across all four Atlantic provinces. Additionally, popular research on women's reintegration is largely quantitative in nature (Pollack, 2008). I utilized qualitative methods to provide a descriptive report of women's experiences from their own perspective and used their language to bring increased visibility to a group that we know very little about. Furthermore, much of the literature on women's transition from jail/prison focuses on individual factors that lead to "success" or "failure" and ignores the impact of the social context on women's re-entry. In my study, I used a feminist ecological analysis to highlight the fact that the settings in which women are embedded influence their transition. The study makes an important contribution to the reintegration literature by showing that individual, relational, environmental, and social factors play a role in facilitating and inhibiting positive reintegration experiences among women exiting provincial correctional facilities.

Methodological and Conceptual Framework

My research was inspired by several methodological and conceptual epistemologies. In particular, feminist standpoint theory, community psychology concepts, qualitative inquiry,

and grounded theory guided my study. While these frameworks are discussed in greater detail in the following chapters, I will introduce the connections between feminism and community psychology, as these epistemologies shaped how I chose my research topic and approached my study.

Both feminist and community psychology concepts provide the framework for this study. Many of the guiding notions that provide the foundation for community psychology parallel those of feminism (Bond, Hill, Mulvey, & Terenzio, 2000; Mulvey, 1988). At the core of feminism and community psychology is their focus on understanding the experiences of oppressed groups. Women in provincial jails are not only marginalized within society, but as this study showed they are oppressed within the correctional system itself. The needs of men in general and women in the federal system have been put before those of women entangled within provincial corrections. Provincially sentenced women are among one of the least acknowledged groups within Corrections today.

In addition to a focus on making marginalized groups more visible, community psychology and feminist approaches emphasize the importance of understanding individuals within the broader social context (Bond et al., 2000). Both recognize the need to move past traditional individual levels of analysis and examine social issues in terms of larger socio-political structures. It is my hope that by examining the experiences of provincially sentenced women within their environment it becomes apparent that we have a collective responsibility towards their well-being.

While there are many similarities between feminism and community psychology, little progress has been made in developing a feminist community psychology (Bond et al., 2000; Bond & Mulvey, 2000). While presenting a framework for a feminist community

psychology is beyond the scope of this project, I wanted to conduct a study that showed how community psychologists could play a pivotal role in the lives of criminalized women. Although community psychology as a sub-discipline prides itself on working with and addressing the needs of vulnerable populations (e.g., the homeless, individuals with mental health issues, and various marginalized cultural groups), I am not aware of any research with criminalized women from a community psychology perspective. Some feminist scholars have criticized community psychology for its inattentiveness to gender issues (Angelique & Culley, 2000, 2003) and for not fully embracing feminist perspectives despite the obvious connection between the two (Bond et al., 2000; Bond & Mulvey, 2000). Consequently, I believe this study makes a significant contribution to the field of community psychology by highlighting the connection between the sub-discipline and a feminist perspective on issues surrounding criminalized women.

Language

The discourse surrounding reintegration typically refers to a woman's "success" or ability to "make it" in the "free world" upon release. Throughout the process of carrying out this research I have struggled with using these terms as a means of describing women's experiences. For me, using the terms "success" and "making it" individualizes women's experiences and discounts the larger social forces that play a significant role in the transition process. In addition, the term "success" has largely been used in relation to recidivism research to merely account for whether or not individuals become re-involved with the criminal justice system upon release. Relying on this term fails to take into account other facets of women reintegration process, as well as women's personal definitions of what "success" means to them. Furthermore, the "free world" lends us to believe that

women have the ability to make free choices. However, the gender, racial, and economic oppression criminalized women experience limits opportunities and access to resources in society, which does not lend itself well to a “free world.” Throughout the document I place traditional reintegration language in quotations in order to highlight the problematic nature of using such terms.

Definition of Relevant Terms

In the following section I present definitions for the commonly used terms I use in my dissertation document:

“Criminalized Women.” Feminist postmodern attention to discourse has called into question the language used to describe women’s involvement in crime (Comack, 2006). Commonly used terms such as “female/women offender,” “women in conflict with the law,” “inmates,” and “criminal” individualize women’s criminality (Maidment, 2006b) support the notion that crime is a manifestation of a personal essence (Laberge, 1991). Furthermore, such labels reinforce “the view of women involved in crime as other and thereby misses the similarities that exist between women” (Comack, 2006, p. 42; Pollack, 2007b). In order to acknowledge the social construction of crime, Laberge (1991) suggested that we think not in terms of “women criminals,” but instead “criminalized women.” Subsequently, feminist researchers and advocates, including myself, have begun to use the term criminalized women to “emphasize the social, political, ‘psy-entific,’ and cultural processes which underpin the labelling of women as ‘offenders’” (Maidment, 2006b, p. 40).

“Provincially Sentenced Women.” I use the term to represent women who have received a provincial sentence of up to two years less a day and who fall under the care of a provincial government.

“Federally Sentenced Women.” I use the term to represent women who have received a federal sentence of two years or more and who fall under the care of Correctional Services Canada.

“Racialized Women.” I use the term racialized women to represent women who experience racism or are made to feel different because of their race, ethnicity, cultural, or religious backgrounds, or skin colour (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, CRIAW, 2002).

“Entangled within the Correctional System.” Many commonly used terms such as “women’s lawbreaking,” work to individualize women’s criminalization experiences. Instead, I use the term entangled within the provincial correctional system to acknowledge the larger societal forces (e.g., poverty) that play a role in women’s criminalization and incarceration.

“Reintegration.” Much of the literature describing reintegration among women (and men) has focused mainly on predictors and outcomes of their failure to succeed in the community (O’Brien & Harm, 2002). For example, most criminological studies focus on recidivism rates among individuals released from jail/prison. In this study, I adopted O’Brien and Harm’s (2002) definition of reintegration as the “dynamic process in which multiple outcomes reflect the variety of unmarked paths that a woman may navigate in returning to her family and community” (p. 299).

“Community.” There has been much debate over what constitutes a community and how it is defined (or not defined) in research. Most people use the term community to represent a geographic location. However, I used the term community not only to signify a

geographic location, but “a readily available, mutually supportive network of relationships on which one could depend” (Sarason, 1974, p. 1).

“Social Policy.” There has been a long standing debate over what constitutes a “social policy” (Westhues, 2003). I have chosen to take a broad approach when defining social policies and include such areas as employment, education, health (physical and emotional), immigration, disability, public housing, income maintenance and welfare services, childcare, and criminal justice under the social policy umbrella.

“Neo-liberalism.” A political rationality, arising in the 1960’s, “founded on the values of individualism, freedom of choice, market dominance, and minimal state involvement in the economy. Under neo-liberalism, the ideals of social citizenship are replaced by the market-based, self-reliant, and privatizing ideals of the new order” (Balfour & Comack, 2006, p.44-5). Market-based liberalism “favours social relations where the state’s sole job is to maintain law and order, removing its influence in the provision of social welfare” (Ross, 2009, p. 63).

“Neo-conservatism.” According to Brown (2006), neo-conservatism is a political ideology, arising in the 1970’s, that is contoured on the belief of linking power and morality. Under neo-conservatism, there is a desire for a “state-led and -legislated moral-political vision” in both the domestic and international sphere (Brown, 2006, p. 697). Laws are instituted to set the moral-religious compass for society and there is a revival of patriotism, strong military presence, expansion of foreign policy, and increased focus on privatization.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is a compilation of the women's incarceration and reintegration experiences, as well as my own interpretations of the research findings. In Chapter One, I review the relevant literature on criminalized women in the Canadian context with a specific focus on provincially sentenced women. I also outline the research on criminalized women that has begun to emerge from the Atlantic Region. In addition, an analysis of the current reintegration literature and an explanation of the current study are presented. In Chapter Two, I provide a detailed description of the methodology. Chapter Three highlights the socio-demographic background of the women who participated in this study in order to shed light on the diverse personal backgrounds of women in the provincial correctional system in Atlantic Canada. In the following chapter, Chapter Four, the incarceration experiences of the women are described. In this section, I outline aspects of the jail environment and identify the types of programming, services, and supports available to women in the provincial system. Chapter Five is a presentation of women's transition experiences with specific attention paid to the formal procedures leading up to and the conflicted emotions women experience during the initial release-process. As well, I present a discussion of the factors that promote or inhibit positive or "successful" reintegration experiences among women exiting the provincial correctional system. In Chapter Six, I present a framework for understanding women's reintegration experiences from a feminist ecological perspective, which takes into account the multiple factors that affect women's lives, including individual, relational, environmental, and societal. In the closing chapter, Chapter Seven, I discuss the implications for policy, practice, and research. In the conclusion, I end with concluding remarks.

CHAPTER I: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON CRIMINALIZED WOMEN AND ISSUES OF REINTEGRATION

Criminalized women historically account for a small percentage of individuals entangled within the criminal justice system in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Research has shown that women commit significantly less crime than men do (Belknap, 2001; Statistics Canada, 2008). A large body of literature shows that women's pathways to crime are very different from men and so too are the types of crime they commit. Women commit a greater proportion of property crimes than any other type of offence, whereas men are much more likely to be charged with violent crimes (Statistics Canada, 2006b). The most common crimes committed by women are theft, shoplifting, and fraud (Statistics Canada, 2008). Growing rates of property crimes have been linked to women's deteriorating economic situations (Belknap, 2001; English, 1993; Steffensmeier & Allan, 2004).

Feminist "pathways" research has shown that economic marginality is only one of many social conditions that place women (and girls) at risk of being criminalized. Violence against women has also been shown to shape gender differences in crime (Adelberg & Currie, 1993, 1987; Belknap, 2001; Owen, 1998; Pollock, 2002; Richie, 1996, Steffensmeier & Allan, 2004). The incidence of victimization histories among women in prison is staggering (Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, TFFSW, 1990). Furthermore, alcohol and drug dependency plays a large role in women's criminalization (Richie, 1996). As opposed to men, women are more likely to have addictions due to "self-medicating" in response to the abuse they have experienced in their lives (Arnold, 1990; Owen & Bloom, 1995; Pollock, 2002; Sargent, Marcus-Mendoza, & Yu, 1993). Therefore, a large proportion of women in jail/prison suffer from addictions (Belknap, 2001).

The intersection of gender, class, and race is evident in the lives of many criminalized women (Balfour & Comack, 2006; Davis, 2003; Sudbury, 2005). Being from a racialized group is one of the most significant factors that place women and girls at risk of being criminalized. The criminalization and over-incarceration of Aboriginal peoples in Canada are deeply rooted in historical forces of oppression and colonialism (Jiwani, 2001; Neve & Pate, 2005). The impact of colonialization is still being felt today with the over-representation of Aboriginal groups in all state-controlled institutions, including the criminal justice system (Neve & Pate, 2005). These institutions work together to perpetuate the racialization and criminalization of specific groups (Jiwani, 2001). Systemic racism, many have argued, is rampant in the Canadian criminal justice system (Hylton, 2001; Jiwani, 2001). Research has shown that Aboriginal populations are more likely to be targeted by the police, denied bail, held in custody before trial, plead guilty, receive longer sentences, imprisoned upon conviction, incarcerated for minor offences, and less likely to receive parole or probation than non-Aboriginals (Hylton, 2001; Jiwani, 2001).

In addition to historical oppression and discrimination, the current neo-liberal political climate and dominant economic and social policies that have ensued have contributed to the impoverishment and subsequent criminalization of racialized groups, and in particular racialized women (Sudbury, 2005). Federal and provincial government cuts to social spending have nearly eviscerated health, educational, and social services, resulting in the relegation of many poor, racialized people to the criminal underclass (Neve & Pate, 2005). The combination of historical events and current socio-political climate has resulted in Aboriginal peoples, and in particular Aboriginal women, being one of the most severely

disadvantaged of all groups in Canadian society (Neve & Pate, 2005), making them susceptible targets of the criminal justice system.

In fact, the majority of criminalized women are socially and politically marginalized, especially women from racialized groups. In Canada, Aboriginal women are more likely to be undereducated, unemployed, low income, dependent on government social assistance, and raising their children on their own than Aboriginal men and non-Aboriginal populations (Statistics Canada, 2006b), putting them at greater risk of victimization and criminalization. Given their position of marginalization, Aboriginal women have historically been over-represented in the correctional system and the trend is not diminishing. In fact, the rate of imprisonment among Aboriginal women now surpasses that of Aboriginal men (Johnson, 1987; Statistics Canada, 2008).

Despite the fact that women comprise a smaller proportion of the prison population than men, rates of imprisonment among women have escalated at a rapid pace. As incarceration rates have steadily inclined, more attention has been given to women's criminalization and incarceration experiences. As previously mentioned, correctional responsibility in Canada is divided between the federal government and the provinces. The majority of research that has emerged on women in the criminal justice system has focused on federally sentenced women. In comparison to women in federal prisons, relatively little is known about the experiences of women entangled within the provincial correctional system (Boritch, 1997; Micucci & Monster, 2004; Shaw, 1994a).

Provincially Sentenced Women

The majority of women are incarcerated in provincial correctional facilities, not federal prisons. Despite the fact that the largest proportion of the female prison population is under

provincial custody, the bulk of research has been conducted with federally sentenced women. Most of what we know about provincially sentenced women is based on statistical information and much of that data is based on comparisons with men, which fails to provide an adequate representation of women's experiences.

In 2005, there were approximately 2,500 to 3,000 women incarcerated inside provincial correctional facilities. In roughly the past ten years, the rate of women serving provincial sentences has actually decreased. However, during the same timeframe, the number of women on remand (awaiting trial) has more than doubled causing the actual total number of women in provincial custody to increase by 30% (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Statistics show that women are less likely than men are to be sentenced to jail/prison. Furthermore, correctional appraisals consistently report that women receive shorter sentences than their male counterparts (Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario, 2003; Statistics Canada, 2001, 2008). The average sentence-length of women in provincial custody is six months or less. Approximately 40% of provincially sentenced women serve less than 14 days in jail (Shaw, 1994a). Shorter sentence lengths among women are largely attributed to the fact that they predominately commit non-violent crimes.

Gender comparisons have also revealed that women typically have less extensive criminal histories (Statistics Canada, 2001, 2008). For example, women in provincial custody are less likely than men are to have served a provincial sentence in the past (Statistics Canada, 2008). However, recent studies have demonstrated that more and more women are entering the provincial correctional system with multiple prior convictions. For example, a study showed that nearly 80% of women interviewed in two Ontario jails had been incarcerated at least once in the past (Vir Tyagi, 2004).

Property offences, specifically theft and fraud, are the most prevalent charges among women in provincial corrections (Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario, 2003; Shaw, 1994a; Statistics Canada, 2001, 2008; Vir Tyagi, 2004). However, rates of property theft and fraud are approximately double for men. Women's involvement in property-type crimes has been linked to economic marginalization (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario, 2003; English, 1993). A large proportion of women in the provincial system are unemployed prior to arrest (Shaw, 1994a; Vir Tyagi, 2004). In fact, previous research has found that at the time of their offence, nearly 70% of women in provincial custody were not in the workforce (Shaw, 1994a). Furthermore, women's overrepresentation in low-paying, low-status, and part-time occupations significantly increased their involvement in property related crimes (English, 1993).

Poverty plays a crucial role in women's pathways to crime (Balfour & Comack, 2006). Increased levels of economic deprivation among provincially sentenced women can be attributed to the fact that they have had to become increasingly reliant on social assistance. In fact, social assistance is often cited as the primary source of income among provincially sentenced women (Vir Tyagi, 2004). Inadequate welfare incomes have left the vast majority of its recipients, not only women entangled in provincial corrections, living in poverty (National Council of Welfare, 2006). This is an important fact to consider in understanding women's criminalization, because it illustrates that women are increasingly being incarcerated due to their impoverished state, committing crime in an effort to survive (Balfour & Comack, 2006; Pate, 2006).

Another characteristic that women in the provincial system share is that they typically have low levels of educational attainment and fundamental skills for sustainable

employment (Statistics Canada, 2001). Many women who become entangled in provincial corrections leave the education system at a young age, rarely staying in school long enough to graduate from high school (Shaw, 1994a; Vir Tyagi, 2004). Previous research has shown that over 50% of women in provincial custody had not completed high school (Vir Tyagi, 2004). Aboriginal women tend to be among the largest proportion of women in the provincial system with low levels of schooling (Shaw, 1994a). Popular literature and statistical profiles fail, however, to adequately acknowledge women's position of marginalization as a significant factor in low education levels and high rates of unemployment. Few women living on the margins of society are afforded the opportunity to advance their education and secure well-paying, stable employment.

In addition to being undereducated and unemployed, women under provincial supervision also tend to be young and predominantly single (Shaw, 1994a; Statistics Canada, 2001). Interestingly, provincially sentenced women are younger, as well as more likely to be single than their female federal counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2008). Many women who become entangled within the provincial correctional system are mothers (Comack, 2000; Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario, 2003; Shaw, 1994a; Vir Tyagi, 2004). For example, Vir Tyagi (2004) found that nearly 80% of women in her study had children. Most women had their children living with them prior to custody (Shaw, 1994a). Once they are incarcerated, children are forced into alternative living arrangements either with family members or through Social Services. Children are often the major source of concern for imprisoned women (Belknap, 2001; Bloom & Steinhart, 1993; Boudin, 1997), regardless of the length of time they spend on the inside. The fact that the majority of criminalized women are mothers significantly impacts their incarceration experiences

and points to the importance of recognizing their gender-specific needs. However, few programs exist in the correctional system to address the needs of women who have children.

Provincially sentenced women, like their federal counterparts, have extensive histories of violence and victimization that generally start in childhood and continue into their adult lives. In one study, 72% of women had been physically abused at some point in their lives (Shaw, 1994a). A recent study found that 85% of women in two provincial correctional facilities in Ontario have histories of sexual victimization (Vir Tyagi, 2004). Aboriginal women in particular have experienced abuse at alarming rates (Shaw, 1994a). Women's histories of victimization are linked to their emotional well-being. Therefore, it is not surprising that many women in the provincial system suffer from mental health issues. Women identify depression and anxiety as being most prevalent (Shaw, 1994a). Seventeen percent of women in one study disclosed that they suffered from a diagnosed mental illness (Vir Tyagi, 2004). Despite the high prevalence of victimization and mental health concerns among criminalized women, few services to address these issues exist for women at the provincial level.

The vast majority of women in the provincial correctional system also suffer from addictions. Seventy-nine percent of women in provincial custody report significant alcohol and drug use throughout their lives (Shaw, 1994a). Vir Tyagi (2004) found that 65% of the women who participated in her study currently battled addictions and 61% of those women said they had been abusing drugs and/or alcohol at the time of their offence. Overall, Aboriginal women in provincial custody have been found to have higher rates of alcoholism than non-Aboriginal women do (Shaw, 1994a). Many women use drugs and

alcohol to escape from and cope with the violence, trauma, and abuse they have experienced in their lives. Not surprisingly, addiction is subsequently often directly linked to mental health, and both play a large role in women's criminalization experiences.

The intersection of gender and race is also important to examine when looking at the experiences of criminalized women. While a disproportionate number of Aboriginal people fill our federal prisons and provincial jails, over-representation is even greater among women in the provincial system. There are more Aboriginal women in provincial custody (30%) compared to men (21%) (Statistics Canada, 2008). Furthermore, Aboriginal women in provincial jails (30%) outnumber Aboriginal women in the federal system (25%).

Very little is known about the policies, practices, and procedures of the provincial correctional system. By contrast, the women's federal prison system has been heralded around the world as an exemplary model of women-centred corrections (Blanchette & Brown, 2006; Maidment, 2006a; Pollack & Kendall, 2005). Correctional Services Canada has adopted the rhetoric and discourses of empowerment, meaningful options and choice in programming, respect and dignity, shared responsibility, and a nurturing environment as a new approach to women's corrections (TFFSW, 1990). In order to better meet the needs of the women in their care, women-only/women-centred correctional facilities were established across the country to incarcerate federally sentenced women. However, the majority of women serve provincial sentences, not federal. There are no "women-centred" provincial correctional facilities that I am aware of in this country. At the provincial level, women are predominantly housed in male-dominated, out-dated correctional facilities with questionable living conditions (Micucci & Monster, 2004). Incarcerating women and men in the same facility may seem practical, given the relatively small number of women in

provincial custody as compared to men. Men are imprisoned more than women at a rate of 10:1 (Statistics Canada, 2005a). However, imprisoning women in male-dominated facilities fails to meet the gender-specific needs of women. Jails rarely espouse the women-centred principles that have become renowned at the federal level. Very few programs, services, and support specifically designed for women exist at the provincial level (Shaw, 1994a). For example, as this study demonstrates, male-centred correctional facilities typically lack appropriate mental health counselling to help women deal with their victimization histories, gender-specific addiction support, as well as ways for women to maintain contact with children during their incarceration. Women-centred approaches to corrections and the programming they provide are needed, regardless of whether it is the federal or provincial system.

Provincially Sentenced Women in Atlantic Canada

While recent studies have begun to emerge from Atlantic Canada, there remains much to be learned about women entangled within the provincial correctional system. Few correctional statistics on women are published at the provincial level in the region and, as I found out, are difficult to obtain. Given that few statistics are readily available, I personally requested current information on women under provincial supervision from each of the four Atlantic provinces. Two of the provinces did not provide any data. My request went unanswered by the Department of Justice in Nova Scotia. Additionally, the Correctional Services Division of the Office of the Attorney General in Prince Edward Island said they did not have on file the statistical information I required on file. However, I did receive statistical information from the Department of Justice in both New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Based on available statistics from the two provinces that provided data, it appears that the number of women admitted into provincial custody in the Atlantic Region is on the rise. For example, in New Brunswick, the number of provincially incarcerated women increased from 220 in 2000-2001 to 273 in 2004-2005 (New Brunswick Department of Justice, NBDJ, 2007¹). Women's incarceration rates have also rapidly increased in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2003-2004, the number of women admitted into custody was 78, up from 32 in 1999-2000 (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Justice, NLDJ, 2007²). By 2006-2007, the number of women incarcerated in the province had further increased to 96.

In addition to increased incarceration rates among women in general, greater numbers of racialized women are being imprisoned at the provincial level. The Atlantic Region has seen a large increase in admissions to custody among women of ethnic minority groups. Aboriginal women represent approximately 12% of the total number (both federal and provincial) of women incarcerated in Atlantic Canada (Correctional Services Canada, 2002). In Newfoundland and Labrador, the number of racialized women (e.g., Inuit, Innu, Mi'Kmaq, and "other" groups) jumped from zero in 1999-2000 to 15 in 2006-2007 (NLDJ, 2007). In New Brunswick, the number of Aboriginal women increased 2.4% between 2000 and 2005 (NBDJ, 2007). Furthermore, Black women are disproportionately represented in the correctional system in Nova Scotia. Despite the fact that Black women and men

¹ I asked each province to provide any statistical data they had relevant to women in the provincial correctional system. Only two of the four Atlantic provinces provided data. The compiled data from New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador was mailed to me. No reference was provided. The statistical information presented in the first footnote is from the official records of the New Brunswick Department of Justice, Community and Correctional Services Division. Further reference to this material in this document will be noted as: (NBDJ, 2007).

² See above footnote. The statistical information presented in the second footnote is from the official records of the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Justice, Community and Correctional Services Division. Further reference to this material in this document will be noted as: (NLDJ, 2007).

represent approximately only 2% of the general population in Nova Scotia, Black women have been known to comprise as much as 20% of the province's prison population (Solicitor General's Special Committee on Provincially Incarcerated Women in the Province of Nova Scotia (SCPIW), 1992).

Consistent with national trends, women in Atlantic provincial jails are typically young, falling between the ages of 20 to 40 (Maidment, 2002; Micucci et al., 1997; Micucci & Monster, 2004; NLDJ, 2007; NBDJ, 2007; Smith & Parriag, 2005). Most of the women are single (Maidment, 2002; Micucci & Maidment, 1997; Micucci et al., 1997; Smith & Parriag, 2005). The vast majority of provincially sentenced women in the region are also mothers who, like previous studies have shown, had their children living with them prior to incarceration (Maidment, 2002; Micucci & Monster, 2004; Smith & Parriag, 2005; SCPIW, 1992). Many women have not completed high school (Micucci et al., 1997; Smith & Parriag, 2005). Given low levels of educational attainment, unemployment is often a reality for many of the women entangled in the Atlantic provincial correctional system (Micucci et al., 1997; Micucci & Monster, 2004; SCPIW, 1992). A large number of women come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Most rely on social assistance as their main source of income (Maidment, 2002; Micucci et al., 1997; Smith & Parriag, 2005).

The majority of women who have been incarcerated in Atlantic Canada have suffered from extensive histories of violence and abuse (SCPIW, 1992). In addition, a large proportion of provincially sentenced women in the region suffer from drug and/or alcohol addictions (Smith & Parriag, 2005; SCPIW, 1992). In Prince Edward Island, 89% of women interviewed in a community-based provincial study indicated that they had an addiction (Smith & Parriag, 2005). Many women in provincial jails in the Atlantic Canada

suffer from mental health issues (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005; SCPIW, 1992). In particular, Nova Scotia has witnessed a significant increase in the number of women with mental illnesses imprisoned within its correctional facilities (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005).

The vast majority of women in the region serve provincial sentences for minor property offences and pose little threat to the community (Maidment, 2002; Micucci et al., 1997; Micucci & Monster, 2004; Smith & Parriag, 2005; SCPIW, 1992). In 2006-2007, almost 50% of women in custody in Newfoundland and Labrador were imprisoned for property offences (NLDJ, 2007). As in other areas of the country, theft and fraud were among the most common types of crime committed by women serving provincial sentences across Atlantic Canada (Micucci et al., 1997; Micucci & Monster, 2004; NLDJ, 2007; NBDJ, 2007; Smith & Parriag, 2005). Most women also serve short sentences. For example, in New Brunswick, 85% of women in provincial custody in 2004-2005 were serving sentences of 90 days or less (NBDJ, 2007). In Prince Edward Island, a snapshot of women serving provincial sentences in February 2005 showed that 50% of women in custody served less than 15 days in jail (Smith & Parriag, 2005).

Recent studies have shown that many women serving provincial sentences in the Atlantic Region had histories of repeated criminalization (Micucci & Monster, 2004; Smith & Parriag, 2005). For example, in Newfoundland and Labrador, 63 of the 96 women admitted into custody in 2006-2007 had prior convictions (NLDJ, 2007). Paradoxically, the province has also seen a rise in incarceration rates among women serving jail terms for first offences. From 1999 to 2007, the number of incarcerated women without previous convictions more than doubled.

In the Atlantic Region, as in other provinces, relatively few studies have been conducted examining the experiences of provincially sentenced women. To date, only a handful of published scholarly work has emerged. For example, all of the published studies from the region are based on the experiences of criminalized women in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (see Maidment, 2006a, 2002; Micucci et al., 1997; Micucci & Monster, 2004). In addition to the academic literature, some community-based reports have recently surfaced from the region examining specific issues related to criminalized women (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005; Smith & Parriag, 2005). The following section highlights the key findings from the available studies.

A qualitative study (Micucci & Monster, 2004), carried out in Newfoundland and Labrador in 1999, focused on the rehabilitative needs of women in a medium-security women's correctional facility. The study demonstrated that conditions at the provincial jail were less than suitable for the care and treatment of women imprisoned there. The relative isolation of the jail and few governmental resources contributed to a deficiency of rehabilitative and treatment programs within the correctional facility, limited access to professional services, and a short supply of community-based programs. Few programming, services, and support were available to women at the provincial level. Subsequently, the authors concluded that significant rehabilitation barriers existed in the provincial system and that the current correctional setting failed to meet the needs of women.

Two studies have detailed the experiences of women in an electronically monitored conditional release program in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (Maidment, 2002; Micucci et al., 1997). Electronic monitoring has been implemented in the province to

facilitate long-term integration among criminalized populations into the community.

Women have been found to be particularly well-suited for the program given their low security risks and have generally reported positive experiences (Micucci et al., 1997). Key advantages of the program were that it provided women with an alternative to incarceration, the opportunity to access community-based support, and a means for women to be at home with their children. However, a gendered analysis of the program found that electronic monitoring for women “may actually be a more onerous and draconian form of punishment than incarceration” (Maidment, 2002, p. 48). When carrying out their sentence at home women experienced increased levels of stress and resentment in their intimate relationships and greater domestic responsibility. In addition, the children of women on electronic monitoring often suffered from the restrictions placed upon their mothers. Maidment argued that despite good intentions to implement community-based alternatives to incarceration, electronic monitoring increases levels of state control in the community.

In her latest work, Maidment (2006a) examined the experiences of 22 women in Newfoundland and Labrador transitioning from the correctional setting to the community on conditional release. She found that upon re-entry, women faced numerous obstacles in obtaining safe and affordable housing, meaningful and sustainable employment, renegotiating interpersonal relationships, as well as accessing community-based supports. The study highlighted the need for meaningful gender-specific programs in both the correctional system and community to assist women in the reintegration process. Very few resources in the province contributed to the lack of services for criminalized women in Newfoundland and Labrador. Furthermore, larger systemic issues played a significant role in women’s criminalization and reintegration experiences.

In addition to published scholarly work, community-based reports on the needs and experiences of criminalized women in the Atlantic Region have appeared. For example, the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia (2005) conducted a study examining the prevalence of mental health issues among women and found that many systemic barriers to treatment existed across the province. Few community-based resources and treatment options existed in the province to meet the needs of women with mental health problems. Subsequently, many women were being criminalized for untreated mental health issues. Given that the correctional system was ill-equipped to meet the needs of criminalized women, many women were released back into the community without treatment and faced the same service barriers they had prior to incarceration.

As well as the work of the Elizabeth Fry Society, the Female Reintegration Committee in Prince Edward Island has begun to look into the needs of provincially sentenced women. The committee commissioned a small needs-assessment examining women's reintegration experiences on the Island (Smith & Parriag, 2005). The study found that women had very specific reintegration needs and faced many challenges upon re-entry. Adequate financial resources and safe, secure, and affordable housing were pressing issues for women immediately upon release. In addition, women had trouble accessing the limited amount of programs, services, and supports that were available in the community (e.g., education, employment enhancement programs, counselling, addiction treatment, and self-esteem/confidence groups). Subsequently, the report argued that existing programming in the province was not able to sufficiently meet the needs of women exiting the provincial correctional system. Recommendations were made for increased support in helping women access a wide variety of programming and services in the community, the creation of

gender and culturally relevant programming for criminalized women in Prince Edward Island, and implementing peer support groups as a means of promoting “successful” reintegration.

The Process of Reintegration: Elements for “Success”

Early studies on the transition from jail/prison have focused primarily on “predicting failure on the basis of demographic and psychological characteristics and has relied mostly on male samples” (O’Brien, 2001a, p. 287). There is a limited amount of scholarly work examining the reintegration experiences of criminalized women (Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario, 2003; Maidment, 2006a; O’Brien, 2001a; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Pollack, 2007b, 2008). Additionally, much of the research in the area has been quantitative in nature and has failed to draw on the firsthand accounts of criminalized women (O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b; Pollack, 2008).

O’Brien’s (2001a, 2001b) examination of women’s re-entry in the United States was one of the first studies to move away from identifying risk factors associated with recidivism to instead focus on understanding the strengths and resources that women used to manage their reintegration. In her work, O’Brien conducted in-depth interviews with 18 women who had “successfully” navigated their transition from jail/prison to the community. The firsthand accounts from the women she interviewed highlighted the immediate need to address basic survival issues upon release. In addition, O’Brien (2001a) found that both “intrapersonal and interpersonal attitudes women had about their own identity and functioning” played a significant role in their transition (p. 3).

In her framework (see Figure 1 below), O’Brien identified five factors that promoted “successful” reintegration. One indicator of women’s “success” was their ability to find

shelter upon re-entry. However, women found it difficult to secure safe and affordable housing. As such, most women relied on family and friends to provide temporary shelter.

In addition, the ability to obtain and retain employment that provided enough income to support the women themselves, as well as their children was also identified as a marker for “success.” However, low levels of educational attainment and stigma attached to criminalization histories made it challenging for women exiting the correctional system to gain employment. As a result, women often had to draw on personal contacts and find creative ways to utilize related skills in order to get a job.

Another aspect that facilitated “successful” re-entry among women was supportive relationships, especially those among family. As well, working towards re-establishing relationships with and regaining custody of children often gave women a sense of hope as they navigated their transition. O’Brien also found that intimate partners and “ex-inmates” (as O’Brien referred to them) provided support to women both on the inside and out. Negotiating relationships with parole officers and meeting their conditions of supervision was also a crucial part of the reintegration process.

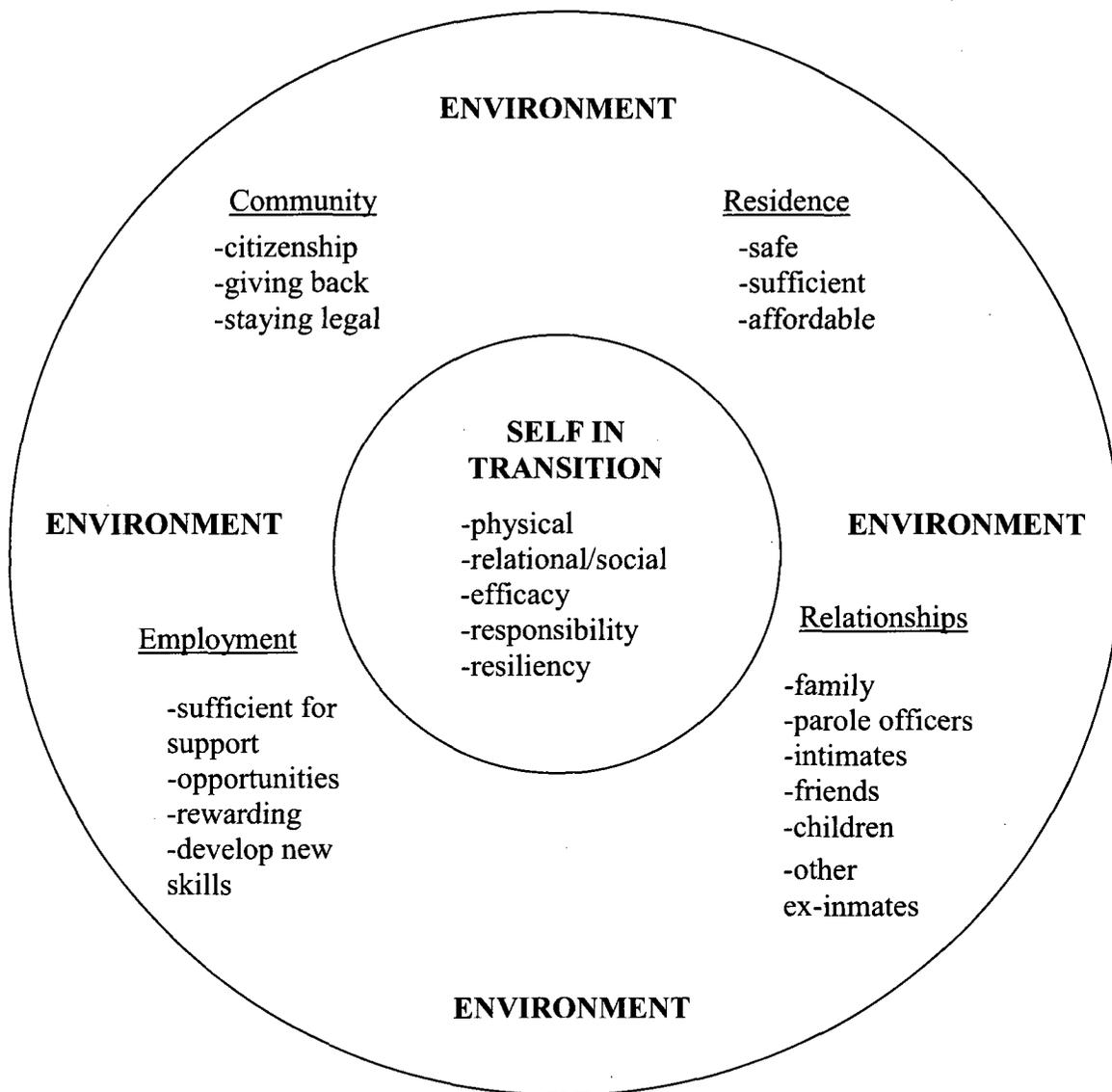


Figure 1. O'Brien's Empowerment Framework for Assessing Women's Transition

In her reintegration framework, O'Brien also identified community membership as a key element. Engaging in activities, such as volunteerism, allowed women the opportunity to be a part of the community and promoted a sense of belonging. From O'Brien's perspective, the "community" contributed to women's "success" not for the social resources it could supply, but by providing women with a sense that they could "give back" to others.

In addition to external factors, O'Brien identified individual competencies or what she termed, "internally derived indicators of change" as being at the foundation of women's "success." These self-initiated changes included the development of "a sense of self-efficacy for managing everyday life, creating relational competence, making decisions to promote physical health, and using internal resources to cultivate hope"(2001a, p. 7). In addition, because women faced multiple challenges upon release, their ability to "bounce back" from adversity was a key characteristic that promoted "successful" reintegration.

O'Brien's research made a significant contribution to the literature by demonstrating that the road to "success" was not the same for all women. She argued that there were a number of elements that impacted women's transition making each women's experience different. How women navigated the obstacles that confronted them upon re-entry ultimately determined their "success." As such, women needed to draw on both internal capacities and external resources in order to "make it."

Although O'Brien's study provided an advanced understanding of the process women underwent as they transitioned from jail/prison to the community and highlighted both internal capacities and external factors that marked women's "success," her framework presented a limited number of potentially influential environmental settings. It would seem that a greater number of environmental factors than housing, employment, and community

reconnection could play a role in women's transition. For example, interactions with social service agencies, mental health services, addiction treatment, and educational programs may be important supports to consider in women's reintegration. In fact, O'Brien herself briefly mentioned in the text of her book, *Making it in the Free World* (2001b), the need for educational and vocational training, rehabilitative programs, and medical care within the prison system. However, these elements were not included in her empowerment framework for assessing women's transition from jail/prison (refer back to Figure 1).

In addition, O'Brien's explanation of the reintegration process placed a considerable amount of emphasis on the individual and *her* ability to "make it." "Success" could only be achieved once a woman became an "active participant in the social world rather than a passive object, acted upon by the forces in and around her" (O'Brien & Harm, 2002, p. 313). The problem with this perspective is that it fails to adequately acknowledge the larger systemic forces that work to oppress and marginalize criminalized women, making it exceptionally difficult for them to become "active participants" in society. For example, in O'Brien's discussion on housing, she does not include an adequate analysis of the societal factors that impact women's (in)ability to secure shelter. For instance, violence from male partners often meant that women could not go back to the same living arrangements they had prior to incarceration. Yet, a lack of societal resources to create and sustain community-based shelters leaves few options for women to seek refuge from violent situations. In addition, the absence of affordable, safe housing adds another layer of difficulty. Women often left jail/prison with little economic resources and few options exist that can provide women with housing they can afford as they attempt to get back on their feet and secure an income.

Another example of the inattention paid to societal factors is that O'Brien identified employment as a marker for "success" and talked about women having to be creative in obtaining a job; by "taking advantage of what they could while incarcerated" and calling on acquaintances for assistance (2001a, p. 7). However, few educational and vocational training programs exist in correctional facilities to help women develop skills to obtain employment upon release (Pate & Kilroy, 2005; Pollack, 2008). As well, parole stipulations place restrictions on women that determine with whom they can associate, which makes it difficult for women to call on family and peers for support (Pollack, 2008). Many acquaintances are seen by Corrections as putting women at-risk of drug-using and "re-offending." Moreover, in her analysis, O'Brien did not consider women's marginalized position in society, which results in women occupying the majority of low-waged, unstable, part-time jobs (Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action, 2008). These systemic issues make it difficult for women, criminalized or not, to obtain well-paying, steady employment sufficient enough to afford basic needs for survival.

Studies that do not incorporate a societal analysis in their explanations of women's reintegration leave much of women's experiences unaccounted for as they transition. As Roth (2004) argued in her critique of O'Brien's framework:

Because federal and state policies systematically shape the obstacle course that awaits women when they leave prison and attempt to establish a place to live, get a job, or regain custody of their children, studies emphasizing how women can develop their own inner resources but not how the state creates barriers will inevitably be theoretically and practically incomplete. (p. 417)

As such, women's experiences need to be framed within the larger social-political context in order to better understand the challenges they face and the strengths they need to draw on as they navigate the difficult transition process.

During the same period that O'Brien was conducting her work, additional studies of women's reintegration were emerging. For example, Parsons and Warner-Robbins (2002) carried out a qualitative study with women who had participated in a California faith-based community program for women released from jail/prison. Twenty-seven women who had been in the community for at least six-months were interviewed about the factors they believed contributed to their "success." The most dominant themes that emerged from the data were rank-ordered. Three factors stood out from the women's stories.

A belief in a God or a Higher Power played the most significant role in women's lives by giving them a source of strength as they transitioned to the community following incarceration. Perhaps this finding was not surprising, given that the women were participating in a faith-based program. However, the researchers stated that no specific questions about spiritual beliefs had been asked. Regardless, the importance of spirituality in women's lives and having a relationship with a God or a Higher Power brought a new dynamic into the picture that had not yet been identified in the reintegration literature.

The second most prominent theme interwoven in the women's stories was freedom from drug addiction. "Successful" reintegration significantly depended on "being clean" and "not using" drugs once women had returned to the community. The participants in this study said that women had to want to stop using and be willing to participate in drug treatment to achieve and maintain sobriety after their release.

Third, support groups offered by the faith-based program were pivotal in helping women achieve “success” in the community after incarceration. Not being alone in their experiences gave women a sense of hope that they could “make it.” Additional information, however, was not provided. For example, knowing who participated in the groups, who ran them, when they were offered, and what topics were covered would have painted a clearer picture of what aspects of the program contributed to women’s “success.”

As well as these three major determinants of “successful” reintegration, additional factors were listed as being key supports in women’s lives. For example, such environmental settings as employment significantly influenced women’s experiences by facilitating independence, a sense of belonging, and increased self-esteem. There was no mention, however, of the challenges women faced in securing a job upon exiting jail/prison. In addition to employment, giving back to the community by supporting others was an important environmental component that led to “success,” which supported earlier findings by O’Brien (2001a, 2001b; O’Brien & Harm, 2002). Helping others helped women by reinforcing their own progress.

Parson and Warner-Robbins study also confirmed O’Brien’s (2001a, 2001b) research, which found that affirmative relationships were crucial in supporting women through the difficult transition process. Positive relationships with family, children, and friends were found to be a driving force for change. As well, supportive relationships with women who had similar experiences facilitated “successful” reintegration. While O’Brien argued it was the support women provided each other on the inside that facilitated “success,” Parson and Warner-Robbins contended that it was the mentoring role that women who had made a successful transition offered other women as they attempted to re-build their lives in the

community that was pivotal. In addition to confirming key relationships O'Brien identified in her work, the study also uncovered a "new" relationship not yet documented in the reintegration literature. Parson and Warner-Robbins found that the faith-based individuals involved in the reintegration program played a fundamental role in helping women achieve "success." These individuals helped women find strength in a God or a Higher Power, develop the mindset to let go of the past, and foster a belief in oneself, which were important elements women could draw upon as they navigated the difficult transition process.

As well as relational and environmental influences, Parsons and Warner-Robbins found that individual characteristics played a significant role in women's reintegration. Learning how to deal with issues from the past and the feelings associated with those experiences allowed women to move forward. In addition, having the personal determination and state of mind to "make it" provided women the inner strength they needed to overcome the barriers they experienced as they faced life on the outside.

The study contributed to the literature by confirming many of the conditions that O'Brien found necessary for "successful" reintegration, including relationships with family, children, and friends, as well as employment and giving back to the community. On top of that, Parsons and Warner-Robbins introduced new elements that facilitated "success." Most notably was the significance of religion and spirituality in women's lives. Further examination regarding the role religion and spirituality can play in the lives of criminalized women is needed, including those with diverse faith backgrounds.

One limitation of the study was that besides naming the factors that promoted women's success, the authors offered very little description about how these elements influenced

women's transition. It would have been helpful to have more detail surrounding the aspects that were identified in the study. As well, an analysis of the broader societal factors would have resulted in a more comprehensive portrait of women's transition experiences.

However, like O'Brien, societal aspects were not discussed.

Around the same time that O'Brien, Parsons, and Warner-Robbins were carrying out their work, Richie (2001) was also conducting a study about the challenges women experienced upon exiting jail/prison. Specifically, she set out to uncover the causes and consequences of arrest and incarceration and determine how these factors impacted women's reintegration. Richie interviewed 42 women from low-income communities of colour in the United States. An analysis of the firsthand accounts of the women who participated in her study revealed seven major challenges that created barriers to "successful" reintegration.

Richie found that the absence of substance abuse treatment within the correctional setting presented specific challenges for women upon re-entry. Correctional treatment programs were sporadic and failed to adequately address the deeper issues related to women's dependency. The lack of opportunity for women to attend to these underlying issues in jail/prison was only exacerbated on the outside, as women rarely had access to treatment programs in their communities. If they did, treatment often occurred in the presence of men and failed to take into account the gender-specific needs of women, including childcare and protection from violent or aggressive situations. Not having the necessary resources to address substance abuse issues often led to relapse and subsequent periods of incarceration.

Richie also reported that medical problems and healthcare needs were some of the greatest challenges women shared upon re-entry. A lack of adequate medical care on the inside resulted in women being released into the community with unmet healthcare needs. Even in instances where women received some level of care while incarcerated, typically for minor health issues, treatment rarely continued after women were released, which often contributed to deteriorating health conditions.

In addition to physical health complications, women suffered from an array of mental health issues, which created numerous obstacles upon release. The women reported that psychological disorders typically went undiagnosed on the inside. Over half had never received treatment for chronic and persistent emotional problems such as depression. As such, Richie concluded that the emotional difficulties women experienced limited their ability to function in their communities prior to incarceration, as well as after their release.

The high prevalence of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder among the women Richie interviewed led her to categorize these issues as a distinct challenge for women. Violence, as well as childhood and adult sexual abuse had a profound effect on women's lives. These issues were rarely addressed in jail/prison, which left women to deal with these unresolved issues as they attempted to rebuild their lives in the community. Moreover, upon release many of these women were confronted with the immediate need for safety and protection from further abuse and violence. A lack of viable options meant that they were often forced to return to abusive relationships or high-risk environments.

Another barrier to "successful" reintegration that emerged from Richie's study was education and employment services. While O'Brien (2001a, 2001b; O'Brien & Harm, 2002) identified the importance of women securing sufficient employment, Richie (2001)

addressed the need for “comprehensive educational, occupational, and income-generating opportunities” for women when they were released from jail/prison (p. 377). Few women had the education and skills necessary to obtain a job. The more barriers women came up against while trying to gain employment, the more likely they were to turn to illegal activity.

As in O’Brien’s study, Richie identified the need for safe, securable, and affordable housing as a challenge to “successful” reintegration. All of the women in Richie’s study had been homeless on at least one occasion and many more than once. Similar to O’Brien’s study (2001a, 2001b), women were usually able to arrange temporary shelter upon release. However, many were unable to find long-term affordable housing. Richie argued that few community-based organizations were available to help women address their housing needs and that affordable options were rapidly disappearing for women with criminalization histories, which created additional barriers.

The final challenge that emerged from the data was child advocacy and family reunification. Women were deeply concerned about the well-being of their children. Most women had lost custody upon arrest and/or experienced fractured relationships with their children as a result of their criminalization. The availability of supports to help women deal with the pain of separation and to help rebuild these relationships was “a stabilizing force in women’s lives” as they made difficult transitions from incarceration to the community (2001, p. 379). However, few services existed to provide women with this type of support.

While Richie identified the importance of children in the lives of the women, her data did not speak to other relationships in women’s lives that could either hinder or facilitate “successful” reintegration. For example, in O’Brien’s study, relationships with family

members, intimate partners, peers, and parole officers were influential. In addition, internal capacities were not identified as necessary components for “success.” However, Richie’s work built on previous studies by identifying several environmental settings that presented specific challenges for women while incarcerated and upon returning to the community. In addition, Richie included a systemic analysis of her findings, which was absent in Parson and Warner-Robbins work and O’Brien’s framework for assessing women’s reintegration.

Richie believed that it was necessary to understand the challenges women experienced within the broader social and institutional contexts of life for low-income women of colour in disenfranchised communities. First, Richie contended that upon returning to the community, the demands and needs of women “form a complex web of concerns and stressors that often compete with and exacerbate one another.” (p. 380). For example, immediately upon re-entry women may need to find housing and employment, attempt to regain custody of their children, try to enter treatment programs, and meet various conditions of their release all at the same time. These demands can consume the majority of women’s emotional and material resources and without proper social support to meet these needs, women’s chances of “making it” are reduced.

Second, Richie argued that the women in her study returned to economically, socially, and politically disenfranchised communities where limited resources and few services made it challenging for women to get the help they required. She contended, “public policy decisions to divest from low-income communities and reduce support programs in marginalized poor areas... have had a serious negative impact” on those who live in those neighbourhoods (p. 381). For example, the reduction of public housing, decreases in public assistance, reductions in social welfare services, and limited medical and mental health

services, coupled with more aggressive criminal justice policies have placed women returning to these areas with criminal records “in one of the worst positions to secure the services they need” (p. 381). In order to facilitate women’s “success,” Richie argued that institutional and community connection was needed, which would require neighbourhood development initiatives to equip communities with sufficient resources to support women.

Third, Richie argued that the women’s stories spoke to the importance of incorporating an understanding of the cultural and gender influences that impacted women’s opportunities and behaviours. The women who participated in Richie’s study did not feel embraced by their communities upon exiting jail/prison. In fact, most felt further marginalized within their already disenfranchised communities, which negatively influenced their ability to “successfully” reintegrate. Richie argued that gender and culture issues needed to be taken into consideration when examining women’s reintegration. However, further research was needed to identify the gender- and culturally-specific approaches that could help women in their transition.

Each of the reviewed studies have made important contributions to the literature by using firsthand accounts of women to gain a greater understanding of the reintegration process; identifying the challenges women face upon release and the strengths they draw upon. They have revealed that women have multiple re-entry needs that must be attended to in order for them to “make it” on the outside. In their own distinct ways, the studies have shown that the individual capacities women possess, the relationships they have available to them, and the environmental settings in which they interact with on a regular basis significantly influence their experiences as they navigate the difficult transition process.

In addition to individual, relational, and environmental components, Richie began to unravel some of the societal factors that create barriers for women. However, a more comprehensive understanding of how larger systemic issues impact women's ability to "successfully" reintegrate into the community was still needed. Recent studies that focus on how the broader social context influences women's transition have begun to emerge in the Canadian context. For example, Maidment (2006a) and Pollack (2008) have highlighted how societal influences such as economic patterns, social policies, political philosophies, social conditions, and societal resources impact women's criminalization and reintegration.

Maidment (2006a) examined the experiences of 22 women in Newfoundland and Labrador transitioning from the correctional setting to the community on conditional release. Similar to previous studies on women's reintegration, she found that upon re-entry, women faced numerous obstacles in obtaining safe and affordable housing, meaningful and sustainable employment, accessing community-based supports, as well as renegotiating interpersonal relationships. One aspect of reintegration that emerged from Maidment's work was that the familial and social support networks women had available to them upon returning to the community far outweighed professional supports provided by state agencies and community organizations. This finding is particularly important in terms of programming and practice models, because most initiatives implemented by the correctional system tend to concentrate on connecting women with formal supports, without paying much attention to the role informal supports can play in assisting women as they transition from incarceration to the community.

In addition, Maidment found that criminalized women experienced a lifetime of formalized social control, which led to increased vulnerability and dependency on

interventions after incarceration. Maidment argued that a vast majority of women who were “successful” upon returning to the community remained entrenched in other state-sponsored control regimes, such as psychiatry and mental health, welfare, and child protection. Therefore, although women might no longer be under the constraints of the correctional system when they return to the community, their lives were still very much controlled by other institutional settings. Given this finding, state agencies must come together to understand the impact they have on women’s lives and work collaboratively to address the larger systemic issues that cause women to become entangled within these systems. Otherwise women will continue to cycle in and out of various state controls.

Maidment concluded that larger systemic issues played a significant role in women’s criminalization and reintegration experiences. She maintained that the challenges women faced when they returned to the community were compounded by systemic gendered inequalities in society. Maidment argued that it was important to situate women’s criminalization and reintegration experiences within the constrained structural and economic situations in which they were forced to operate under in their daily lives. For example, she pointed out that women living in poverty were increasingly being criminalized. Furthermore, Maidment contended that changes to neo-liberal strategies of governance that worked to increasingly marginalize women and led to more and more women being criminalized needed to be reformed. Additionally, she argued that increased societal resources needed to be made available to women to help them meet the demands of daily life and assist them upon re-entry.

Similarly, Pollack (2008) framed the findings of her study within the larger socio-political context. To gain a greater understanding of women’s reintegration experiences,

Pollack interviewed 68 women from across Canada who had served federal prison sentences and were now living in the community. Her examination of women's experiences found that poverty, violence, racism, and addiction contributed to women's criminalization. She argued that the context in which women were criminalized continued to impact women's lives upon returning to the community. Pollack contended that the eradication of social supports and services under the neo-liberal regime have exacerbated poverty and social exclusion among women. Changes in policies have led to increased numbers of women being criminalized and created barriers for women upon re-entry. In conclusion, Pollack argued:

We need to examine the role that prisons play within the current neo-liberal context and question and challenge imprisonment as a response to gendered and racialized realities such as poverty, immigration, homelessness, mental health difficulties, violence against women and addiction. (p. 32)

These two separate, yet complementary studies have made important contributions to the literature by framing women's reintegration experiences within the neo-liberal socio-political context. The researchers agree that the context by which criminalized women have been "excluded by society on the basis of their class, gender, sexuality, and cultural differences, need to be the core focus of any reintegration efforts..." (Maidment, 2006a, p. 151). However, this broader social analysis has been missing from most of the reintegration frameworks that preceded these studies.

From the perspective of the women themselves it is evident that "success" is dependent upon the internal capacities and external resources available to them as they transitioned from incarceration to the community. In their own distinct ways, the studies reviewed have

revealed that individual qualities are important driving forces for change, supportive relationships give women strength, environmental settings can either help or hinder women's "success," and broader societal factors influence all aspects of reintegration. For example, O'Brien (2001a, 2001b; O'Brien & Harm, 2002) and Parsons and Warner-Robbins (2002) demonstrated the importance of empowerment and strengthening individual capacities in promoting "successful" reintegration. They also highlighted the significance of relationships in women's lives both during incarceration and upon returning to the community. However, they did not include an analysis of the societal factors that create barriers in women's lives. On the other hand, Richie (2002) spoke to the importance of understanding women's transition within the larger social and institutional context, but did not discuss internal capacities for change. Richie focused largely on identifying environmental supports women had available to them as they exited jail/prison, including housing, employment, education, addiction treatment, healthcare, and mental health services. Maidment (2006a) and Pollack (2008) included a social analysis to show how societal influences such as economic patterns, social policies, political philosophies, social conditions, and societal resources impact women's criminalization and reintegration. Together, these studies have shown that women have a variety of needs upon re-entry and that they require support on multiple levels as they navigate through the difficult transition process.

The studies reviewed contributed important pieces in understanding the complexities of women's experiences of criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration. What continues to be missing from the literature, however, is a comprehensive framework that incorporates all of the dimensions identified in these studies. This study attempts to fill this gap in the

literature by presenting an ecological framework for understanding and addressing women's transition from incarceration to the community that integrates individual, relational, environmental, and societal factors. A framework missing even one of these components falls short of presenting a complete picture of women's reintegration experiences.

Models for Programming and Practice to Support Criminalized Women

Reintegration Program Models. In light of the scholarly work that has emerged on women's reintegration experiences, models for programming and practice to better support criminalized women upon re-entry have been proposed and implemented. One program that has been developed in New York City to aid women in their transition from jail/prison to the community is the Self-Taught Empowerment and Pride (STEP) program (Henriques & Jones-Brown, 2008). Through a combination of group-centred and individual activities, the STEP program aims to help empower criminalized women to live independent and productive lives in the community after incarceration. The program is based on empowerment theory, which is premised on the belief that individuals have the ability to better their lives by learning how to control their environment, connect with resources, navigate problematic situations, and change existing social situations that limit their functioning (Gibson, 1993 as cited in Henriques & Jones-Brown, 2008).

There were two components of the STEP program. The first consisted of a 10-week "highly structured and intensive learning/training environment" in the correctional facility where women completed a series of workbooks on a variety of topics, including decision-making, stress management, relaxation techniques, sexuality, parenting, substance abuse, violence, etc (Henriques & Jones-Brown, 2008, p. 497). The curriculum provided women

with new information and the skills to apply what they have learned to their daily lives in the community once they have been released. STEP participants were also required to attend school while they were in the program and vocational training was provided to help them gain employment after their release. In addition, substance-abuse counselling and one-on-one release planning was part of the curriculum in the first component of the program.

The second component of STEP was an ongoing, community aftercare program that built upon the work women started on the inside. This part of the program provided recently released women with “a range of alternatives to crime and violence” and the “necessary resources and support to continue their empowerment” (Henriques & Jones-Brown, 2008, p. 505). Women attended weekly group meetings with both newly released women and former program participants who served as role models to identify, discuss, and analyze “their reasons for engaging in crime and criminal behaviors [sic]” (p. 505). The group provided a venue whereby women could share their transition experiences, both good and bad, and seek support from others who have gone through or are going through similar situations.

A major strength of the STEP program was its integration of both group activities and peer support. Peer support has been shown to be transformative in the lives of criminalized women (Pollack, 1994, 2006; Pollack & Brezina, 2006). Establishing peer networks and engaging in support groups upon re-entry have also been identified as an important aspect that promotes “successful” reintegration (Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Pollack, 2008). Indeed, the women who participated in the STEP program reported that peer groups provided pivotal support as they transitioned from jail/prison to the community by

functioning as a surrogate family (Henriques & Jones-Brown, 2008). They argued that the love and concern of fellow group members showed each other provided an environment where women felt safe sharing both their “failures” and “successes.”

In addition to peer support, STEP’s attentiveness to community reconnection was another strong point of the program. As previous studies have suggested, being able to “give back” to the community promoted “success” among women as they transitioned from the correctional setting to the community (O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b, Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002). Through group activities, the STEP program provided women the opportunity to “give back” to others by supporting and mentoring their peers through the reintegration process. By helping others, women were able to further build self-esteem and gain confidence in their own abilities to “make it.”

The fact that STEP included a community aftercare component in its program was also commendable. Many scholars have questioned the ability of the correctional system to provide women with the support, programming, and treatment they needed within an environment that is premised on punishment and control (Pollack, 2006; Pollack & Brezina, 2006). However, while STEP participants were required to complete the correctional curriculum, the community aftercare program was not mandatory. Therefore, without participating in the community component, the first part of the program merely becomes another correctional program focused mainly on developing internal capacities. “Success,” then, largely depended on the individual and *her* ability to “make it.”

While group and community elements were integrated into the STEP program, its heavy reliance on empowerment theory individualized women’s experiences. While it is important to provide women with knowledge and training to develop skills and behaviours

that will help them make positive changes in their lives, there needs to be a balance by framing their experiences within the larger social context. As well, the language and practices of the program enforced dominant discourse that view women as “deviant” and “criminal” and individualizes their criminalization experiences. For example, women were encouraged to identify *their* reasons for engaging in “deviant” and “criminal” behaviours and were often referred to as “inmates” and “offenders.” Furthermore, just prior to their release, women were given the opportunity to attend one of the community meetings. However, they were required to wear their jail/prison uniforms and were escorted by correctional staff. According to Henriques and Jones-Brown (2008), these “actions serve to remind those who have been released from where they came, as well as to what they might return” (p. 506). This statement (and practice) is rather disturbing, because it enforces notions of punishment and control and instils fear in the women by showing them what can happen if *they* cannot “make it’ in the “free world.”

One final critique is that, like many other correctional programs, the STEP program was originally designed and implemented to reduce recidivism rates among men. After the program had begun to show promise with male prisoners, it was then adopted for use with women. The premise of the program continued to be on reducing recidivism and increasing individual capacities, not on addressing the societal barriers that impede women’s reintegration. Instead of importing programming implemented in men’s prisons, reintegration supports must be designed by women for women. Furthermore, programs to support women through the difficult reintegration process should incorporate aspects that address the broader societal forces that influence their ability to “successful” reintegrate into the community after incarceration.

In addition to STEP, the Health Link program was implemented in the city of New York to address substance abuse issues among women released from local jails. The goal of the program was to provide women with support both on the inside and out to reduce their drug use and HIV risk behaviour, avoid re-arrest, and increase quality of life (Richie, Freudenberg, & Page, 2001). Health Link was designed to be a comprehensive reintegration program that not only worked one-on-one with women, but also sought to address the community conditions that made it challenging for drug-using women to “successfully” reintegrate into their neighbourhoods after incarceration.

The Health Link program was developed to achieve specific objectives on four levels. First, the program aimed to deliver coordinated and integrated client services to reduce drug use and recidivism rates among women. To meet this objective, a six-week course was implemented within the correctional setting to provide women with individual counselling, discharge planning, and case management services. Health Link staff visited women in jail and provided these services on the inside, as well as for up to one year after they had been released. For the most part, women worked with the same staff member throughout the program. This was an important aspect of the program, as it allowed for continuity from the correctional setting to the community.

The client services mentioned above were specifically designed to address individual factors. Besides substance abuse issues it was not apparent if any other aspects of women’s lives were addressed. For example, in the STEP program parenting and family/intimate partner violence, which have been identified as being associated with women’s drug-use, were included as part of the curriculum. Furthermore, STEP attempted to empower women by providing them with skills necessary to make positive changes in their lives and to

effectively deal with challenges that they would face in their daily lives upon returning to the community. It is not clear if the Health Link program worked to strengthen the individual capacities of women to help them in their transition.

The second objective of the Health Link program was to increase the capacity of community organizations and service providers to effectively support women released from jail. These activities centred on educating community-based agencies on the needs of women returning to the community and strengthening their capacity to respond to the needs of criminalized women. Ultimately, Health Link worked to make services more accessible to women so that when they decided for themselves that they were ready to get help, the services would be available. It was not clear, however, if Health Link was successful in increasing the accessibility of services to help women as they transitioned.

Third, the program aimed to establish a network of existing service providers to engage in local issues that impacted vulnerable populations in the community, including women. The network shared resources, advocated for procedural and policy changes among public agencies that served criminalized women, and established a working relationship with State Corrections in order to respond to the needs of women, reduce crime rates, as well as improve the overall health and well-being of community residents. The advocacy role that Health Link played was a unique facet of their program and demonstrated the important role that community organizations can play in the lives of criminalized women. There was no mention, however, of the types of agencies that joined the network. For example, it was not known if feminist-based or women-centred organizations were included or if most of the agencies in the network were mandated to provide services to men and later adapted their programs to support women.

Finally, Health Link's fourth objective was to meet was to work towards changing correctional policies and securing resources to improve the quality of life for women. The program advocated for Corrections, public agencies, and policy-makers to provide gender-specific release planning, expand community services to help women address their needs upon re-entry, and better coordinate services that currently exist to help women as they transition. By focusing on policies and societal resources, Health Link was able to address some of the larger social systemic issues that impacted women's lives, which has been missing from much of the reintegration literature, especially in relation to programming and practices. This aspect of the program was what set it apart from the other reintegration supports that have been implemented in the correctional environment and in the community.

Health Link appeared to concentrate largely on changing correctional policies to better meet the needs of women. While extremely important, it was unclear if the project sought to change policies in other domains. For example, housing, childcare, employment, and social welfare policies also have a profound effect on women's lives and present specific challenges for women prior to their incarceration, as well as upon returning to the community (Pollack, 2008). Therefore, a widening of the scope of policies that reintegration programs aim to change is needed.

Both Health Link and STEP aimed to help women navigate the difficult reintegration process. The programs shared similar aspects, such as offering women services in jail/prison and the community, as well as providing them with opportunities to draw support from peers. Despite these similarities, the programs addressed very different aspects of women's reintegration. STEP focused more heavily on the individual through the

development of knowledge and skills to empower women as they transitioned. By comparison, Health Link devoted much of their efforts to working with community agencies to tackle environmental and social conditions that made it difficult for women to reintegrate into the community after incarceration. By focusing on different facets of reintegration, these programs highlighted the importance of addressing individual, relational, environmental, and societal issues. A program model that incorporates all four components needs to be devised to address the multiple needs of criminalized women.

Given that reintegration among criminalized women is a relatively new area of study, few program models have been developed and implemented to assist women upon re-entry. The STEP and Health Link programs were among the first to emerge in the reintegration literature. Both of these program models have been implemented in the United States. The extent to which reintegration supports similar to these programs have been implemented in the Canadian context is unknown.

Gender-Specific Programming to Support Criminalized Women. As Richie, Freudenberg, and Page (2001) pointed out, there is a need for gender-specific services to support women as they make the difficult transition from incarceration to the community. While few reintegration programs have been developed and implemented specifically for female prisoners, many scholars have identified the importance of creating gender-specific services to address the multiple needs of criminalized women both on in jail/prison and the community. Together the incarceration and reintegration literature has shown that there are a number of core elements that gender-specific programs must embrace in order to adequately meet the needs of women. These elements include:

Empowerment: Programming must provide women with knowledge and skills to make positive changes in their lives (O'Brien, 2001, 2001b; Henriques & Jones-Brown, 2008; Richie, Freudenberg, & Page, 2001).

Autonomy: Programming must give women the opportunity to articulate and define their own experiences, identify their individual needs, have control over their treatment, and choose the type of community support they wish to access (Pollack, 2008; Pollack & Brezina, 2006).

Cultural Relevance: Programming must be relevant to women with diverse cultural backgrounds (Maidment, 2006a; Richie, 2001; Smith & Parriag, 2005).

Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing: Programming must allow women the opportunity to engage in and be a part of every aspect of the treatment process (Pollack & Brezina, 2006).

Coordinated and Comprehensive: Programming must take into account the range of women's experiences and coordinate available services in order to meet the multiple needs of women (Eaton, 1993; Richie, 2001; Richie, Freudenberg, & Page, 2001; Shaw, 1994).

Peer Support: Programming must provide opportunities for women to draw support from others and to be mentored by women with shared experiences (O'Brien, 2001a, 2001b; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Pollack, 2008; Richie, 2001).

Community Reconnection: Programming must help women develop a sense of belonging and provide them with opportunities to "give back" to the community

(Eaton, 1993; Henriques & Jones-Brown, 2008; O'Brien, 2001; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; Richie, 2001).

Community Capacity: Programming must work to strengthen the community's capacity to work with criminalized women and address neighbourhood issues (Henriques & Jones-Brown, 2008; Richie, 2001; Richie, Freudenberg, & Page, 2001).

Structural Influences: Programming must acknowledge women's experiences within the broader social context and address the larger structural influences that shape their criminalization and reintegration experiences (Maidment, 2006a; Pollack, 2008; Pollack & Brezina, 2006; Richie, 2001).

In the Canadian context, gender-specific programming that incorporates many of the core elements described above has been implemented within women's federal prisons. The women-centred approach adopted by Correctional Service Canada was significantly influenced by principles outlined in *Creating Choices* (TFFSW, 1990). These principles included: (1) empowerment, (2) meaningful options and responsible choices in programming to meet women's diverse needs, (3) respect and dignity, (4) a supportive environment that nurtures women, and (5) shared responsibility by criminalized women, correctional staff, and community stakeholders. It was hoped that by shifting from the traditional paradigm of male-dominated corrections towards a women-centred approach that the inequalities and harm done to women could be reduced (TFFSW, 1990).

While Correctional Service Canada has been praised for adopting a women-centred approach (Blanchette & Brown, 2006), recent criticisms from feminist scholars have emerged questioning the extent to which these principles have actually been implemented.

Scholars argue that, although the correctional rhetoric has changed around women's imprisonment, old philosophies and practices remain intact (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Pollack & Kendall, 2005). For example, Pollack (2007b) stated that in spite of "some important reforms, feminist efforts to change criminal justice practices and policies to improve the treatment of female prisoners have not significantly altered the foundations of penal theory and practice" (p.158).

Furthermore, feminist advocates of criminalized women have identified the inherent inconsistency that exists in attempting to put women-centred philosophies into practice in a prison environment mandated to punish, regulate, discipline, and control (Kendall, 2000, 1994; Peters, 2003; Pollack, 2007; Pollack & Brezina, 2006). Even Correctional Service Canada has acknowledged the paradox of implementing feminist ideologies and practices within an intrinsically oppressive prison environment (Blanchette & Brown, 2006). Discrepancies between theory and practice are most pronounced with respect to the therapeutic practices that are carried out in federal correctional facilities. In fact, evidence has accumulated indicating that the therapeutic practices Correctional Service Canada employs are contradictory to the women-centred principles said to guide their philosophies, procedures, and practices (Auditor General of Canada, 2003; Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2003; Kendall, 2000; Kendall & Pollack, 2003; Pollack, 2007; Pollack & Brezina, 2006; Pollack & Kendall, 2005).

The adoption of the "psy-sciences" (psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy) as a treatment regime for imprisoned women has been found to be particularly problematic because it depicts women as lacking the ability to adjust and cope with the prison context (Kendall, 2000). Furthermore, under the psy-sciences women are viewed not for their

strengths and capacities, but for their individual “deficiencies” (Kendall, 2000; Kendall & Pollack, 2003; Pollack, 2006, 2004; Pollack & Kendall, 2005). As a result, imprisoned women have been individualized, pathologized, and their actions de-politicized (Kendall, 2000). In addition, the psychological discourses and therapeutic practices carried out in women’s federal prisons have upheld dominant power relations within the prison environment (Kendall, 2000), as well as served as a method for regulating women’s behaviour (Kendall, 2000; Kendall & Pollack, 2003; Pollack, 2007, 2006; Pollack & Kendall, 2005).

In addition, the concentration on the “psy-sciences” has meant that women are viewed as being responsible for their criminalization without much consideration given to the larger social systemic issues that limit their options. Although scholars and researchers have identified the importance of understanding the broader social context of women’s experiences, little has been done by Correctional Service Canada to address these issues. There is no evidence to suggest that the correctional system has implemented practices that contextualize women’s experiences within their social environment. Nor does it appear that Correctional Service Canada sees itself as having a role in working with community-based agencies and policy-makers to tackle larger systemic barriers that define women’s criminalization and influences their reintegration, such as housing and employment. Without developing a means to partner with others, including women, much of the challenges women experience will continue to exist.

Another issue of contention that has transpired recently about the discursive shift taking place in women’s corrections is the reconfiguration of the notion of responsabilization and empowerment to include both the individual and community so that corrections is no longer

conceptualized as the sole responsibility of the federal government (Hannah-Moffat, 2000). Correctional Service Canada's new interest in collaborating with community and advocacy groups in developing various programming has led to women being governed by individuals and groups outside of the state (Hannah-Moffat, 2000). Furthermore, rather than working with community-based organizations to put structures in place to help women meet their needs on the inside and upon release, these agencies instead have become a site where Corrections can offload services onto the community.

Hannah-Moffat (2004a, 2004b, 1999) has also argued that the socio-political climate which exists today has resulted in the gendering of risk. Under the new penal rhetoric, a large proportion of criminalized women have been constructed as a heightened security risk (Hannah-Moffat, 2000). Correctional Service Canada has redefined women's needs as risk factors and linked risk reduction with therapeutic intervention (Hannah-Moffat, 1999). Criticisms have emerged highlighting the fact that individuals unwilling to participate in or who are seen as resistant to the new regime of empowerment are subjected to a different means of punishment (Hannah-Moffat, 2000). For example, increased security measures have been put in place to "manage" women who have been constructed by the system as "risky" or "high-needs." Alarmingly, Correctional Service Canada have not viewed the new security developments as being contradictory with its wider philosophy of empowerment because they see these women as not being "amenable to the principles" outlined by *Creating Choices* in the first place (Hannah-Moffat, 2000, p. 527).

In regard to reintegration, very little has been done to implement gender-specific programming and practices within federal women's prisons to help women prepare for their release. While the correctional system espouses that mechanisms have been put in place to

assist women in the re-entry process (see Correctional Service Canada, 2006a), the firsthand accounts of women reveal that very little release planning and support is carried out at the federal level (Pollack, 2008). Instead, women felt disillusioned by the promise of treatment and healing under the new women-centred regime and leave prison with much of the same problems they faced before they were imprisoned.

The changes to criminal justice practices and policies to improve the treatment of criminalized women that have taken place at the federal level have done very little to help provincially sentenced women. Unlike the federal system, provincial governments are not mandated to provide gender-specific programming. Therefore, women-centred policies have not infiltrated provincial jails. Implementing women-centred ideologies and practices becomes increasingly more complicated at the provincial level, because programs not only have to be carried out in oppressive environments, but also in ones constructed for and housed predominantly by men. The present study emerged from a concern for the lack of knowledge about the types of programming that exist at the provincial level, as well as the absence of firsthand accounts by women in the provincial correctional system regarding the types of support they deem helpful to assist them in their transition.

Using a Feminist Ecological Model to Frame Women's Reintegration Experiences

A review of the literature shows that women's needs must be addressed on multiple levels in order to provide them with adequate support as they transition from incarceration to the community. The studies reviewed showed in various ways that individual, relational, environmental, and societal components need to be attended to in order to better support women through the reintegration process. However, I have not presented yet a framework that incorporates elements of all four dimensions. The ecological model, adopted by many

community psychologists allows for equal attention to be placed on each level and provides a useful framework for understanding and addressing women's reintegration.

One of the earliest ecological models was proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), who argued that it is impossible to study people without taking into account the context of their life and surroundings. Bronfenbrenner premised his model on the belief that human development occurs within a social milieu and that one's growth is not only affected by organic factors within the person, but by interactions between the individual and the larger social context. In Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development, there are a number of overlapping ecosystems that significantly influence one's life. He conceptualized these ecosystems as nested, hierarchical, and interdependent structures (see Figure 2 below).

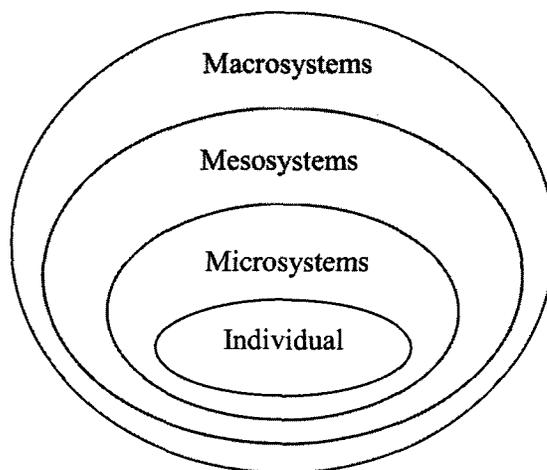


Figure 2. Nested Ecological Levels of Analysis

At the core of the ecological model, nested within the larger systems, is the individual, who is significantly affected by all the structures in the ecological model. From an ecological standpoint, the individual is comprised of intrapersonal characteristics and

biological traits that influence their relationship(s) with the environment. The individual engages directly with the innermost structure called the microsystem (relational), which are the direct interpersonal relationships one has with other people, such as family and friends. The next structure in the model is the mesosystem (environmental), which mediates between the smaller microsystems and the larger macrosystems. Included in the mesosystems are such environments as schools, religious affiliations, places of employment, and community-based organizations. The outermost structure, called the macrosystem (societal), significantly influences all other ecosystems in the model, including the individual. It is comprised of the social, political, and cultural structures of society. Included within the macrosystem are economic patterns, social conditions, social policies, political philosophies, societal resources, as well as cultural norms and values. Together, these ecosystems make up the social context of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Individuals practicing community psychology have rejected conventional mechanistic and reductionistic approaches characteristic of mainstream psychology in favour of ecology, which values holism over individualism (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Proponents of community psychology have argued that the individual level of analysis embraced by traditional psychologists place too much emphasis on individual psychological processes and ignore the important role social systems play in human development (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Adopting an ecological paradigm provides community psychologists with the framework to better understand the relationships between individuals and their environments within the larger socio-political context environments (e.g., Kelly, 1966; Trickett, Kelly, & Todd, 1972), allowing peoples'

experiences to be contextualized over time and across multiple levels of analysis (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

The ecological metaphor has allowed community psychologists to understand the oppressive qualities of environments that impede personal growth and create problems in living, as well as the positive qualities that encourage competence, health, and well-being (Cowen, 1994; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). The ecological model has also provided community psychologists with a foundation for recognizing that different individuals are affected in distinct ways by their environments. These aspects are all very pertinent in studying criminalized women, as their interactions with the environment have led to their marginalization and subsequent criminalization. In addition, an ecological paradigm, in combination with a gendered or feminist lens, lends credence to the fact that women and men experience criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration differently and that different groups of women (e.g., Aboriginal vs. Caucasian women) have diverse experiences as well.

In the field of community psychology, the ecological model has been applied in many areas as a way to understand individuals and their relationships to the environments in which they live (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2001). The ecological metaphor has been most pronounced in examining issues around mental health (e.g., Kelly, 1986; Nelson, Lord, & Ochocka, 2001a). Community psychologists have drawn on the ecological metaphor to help them understand serious mental health issues and the effects deinstitutionalization has had on individuals who suffer from mental illness. They have also used the ecological model to demonstrate that multiple systems must be addressed in order to better support individuals living in our communities with mental health issues.

Based on studies that have emerged in community mental health, it is evident that the experiences of individuals with serious mental health issues parallel those of criminalized women. In fact, many women who have been criminalized and subsequently imprisoned suffer from mental illness (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005; Maidment, 2006a). Psychiatric consumer/survivors often encounter fear, discrimination, prejudice, and stigma from others (Carling, 1995), as do criminalized women. In addition, similar to criminalized women, individuals with serious mental health problems find it challenging to establish peer networks and often feel isolated (Davidson, Hoge, Godelski, Rakfeldt, & Griffith, 1996). Furthermore, individuals with psychiatric histories have difficulties securing employment and obtaining housing (Corrigan & Penn, 1999). In fact, the quality of housing among psychiatric consumer/survivors has been found to be much lower than the general population (Newman, 1994). Likewise, women who have been criminalized often live in low-income, unstable housing in disadvantaged and unsafe neighbourhoods before incarceration and upon re-entry. Additionally, both individuals with serious mental health issues and criminalized women have been subjected to multiple forms of state control (Maidment, 2006a). Furthermore, social policies and practices have worked to oppress and marginalize both groups.

The ecological metaphor has also been instrumental for constructing new paradigms for intervention. For example, in their development of an empowerment-community integration paradigm for mental health, Nelson, Lord, and Ochocka (2001a) framed their work within an ecological approach to show that individual, relational, environmental, and societal change needs to occur to better support psychiatric consumer/survivors. At the individual level, the authors identified stakeholder participation and empowerment as being

key aspects. In addition, informal support networks with peers were seen as important relationships to cultivate among those suffering from serious mental health issues. As well, community support and integration were central in supporting psychiatric consumer/survivors. Finally, the authors argued that social justice and access to valued resources needed to be addressed in order to draw attention to and work towards eradicating the inequitable allocation of resources in society that impact the lives of those who suffer from mental health problems.

An ecological framework is appropriate in understanding and addressing women's reintegration, because like individuals with mental health issues the needs of criminalized women in transition must be addressed on multiple levels, taking into account individual, relational, environmental, and societal factors. The ecological model allows for interventions on all four levels and can make a significant contribution to our understanding of women's reintegration by addressing their experiences within a multi-dimensional framework. Community psychologists can also benefit from learning about the lives of criminalized women and their experiences within the environments in which they are embedded.

The application of a gendered lens within an ecological framework can also make a significant contribution to the field. Many of the guiding philosophies that provide the foundation for community psychology parallel those of feminism (Bond, Hill, Mulvey, & Terenzio, 2000; Hill, Bond, Mulvey, & Terenzio, 2000; Mulvey, 1998). However, the field of community psychology has been criticized for its inattentiveness to gender issues (Angelique & Culley, 2000, 2003) and for not fully embracing feminist perspectives despite the obvious connection between the two disciplines (Bond et al., 2000; Bond & Mulvey,

2000; Hill, et al., 2000). The correlation between the experiences of individuals with serious mental health problems and criminalized women may help community psychologists see the value in working with this population. To date, not much attention has been paid by community psychologists to criminalized populations. In fact, after a quick review of the contents of the *American Journal of Community Psychology* (the sub-discipline's flagship journal) between 1998 to 2008 there were only three articles related to criminality: one on neighbourhood violence, the other on crime and social capitalism, and the final article discussed issues of adolescent development and juvenile justice. None specifically addressed women or girls. Community psychologists have been critiqued for its lack of incorporating a sex- and gender-based analysis into their work when examining individuals and their environments (Angelique & Culley, 2000, 2003). By adopting a feminist ecological approach to incarcerated women's reintegration, the impact of sex and gender dimensions on women's experiences is brought to the forefront.

Ecological models for understanding women's experiences have begun to emerge in the criminological literature. For example, Bliss, Cook, and Kaslow (2006) applied an ecological approach to understanding incarcerated women's responses to intimate partner violence. In addition, Meyer and Post (2006) applied a feminist ecological model to explain women's fear of community violence. In this study, I use a feminist ecological analysis to understand women's reintegration and to identify indicators for intervention on an individual, relational, environmental, and societal level to better support provincially sentenced women as they make the difficult transition from incarceration to the community.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

I begin this chapter by stating the study's purpose and objectives. Next, I describe the conceptual and methodological framework that guided the study. Then, I outline the research relationship, including a discussion of my social location within this research project, as well as the ethical considerations I took into account while conducting this study. Next, I describe the methods I used for collecting data. Following the data collection section, I detail the techniques and strategies used for obtaining my study sample and recruiting the women who participated in this project. Finally, I end the chapter with a discussion of the data-analysis techniques I employed, as well as those used to increase the trustworthiness of the findings.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of my study was to explore the incarceration and reintegration experiences of provincially sentenced women in Atlantic Canada. In particular, the research objectives were to achieve a greater understanding of the: (1) experiences of women who are (or have been) incarcerated in provincial correctional facilities, (2) post-jail experiences of provincially sentenced women, (3) types of support available to provincially sentenced women in Atlantic Canada and how these supports impact their reintegration experiences, and (4) the role the community can play in promoting positive reintegration experiences.

In order to achieve the research objectives, I posed the following questions:

- 1) What are the experiences of women who are (or have been) incarcerated in provincial correctional facilities (both in jail and the community)?

- 2) What supports are available to provincially sentenced women both within the correctional facilities (e.g., programming, release planning) and in the community (e.g., employment, healthcare, community connections)?
- 3) What types of supports are needed to assist provincially sentenced women leaving jail and returning to the community?
- 4) What community conditions, if any, may facilitate and/or inhibit positive reintegration experiences?

Conceptual and Methodological Framework

My research was inspired by several conceptual and methodological epistemologies. In particular, feminist standpoint theory, community psychology concepts and values, qualitative inquiry, and grounded theory guided my study. In this section, I present a discussion of the common threads that unite these epistemologies and that provided the foundation for my dissertation research.

At the core of feminism and community psychology is the emphasis on understanding the experiences of oppressed groups. Both disciplines are opposed to traditional conceptualizations of social phenomena that are predominantly rooted in the standpoint of those with power and privilege, which tend to objectify and decontextualize our understanding of marginalized groups (Bond et al., 2000), ultimately devaluing their experiences and ignoring the complexities of their strengths and needs. Instead, feminists and community psychologists challenge us to view social problems and understand the world through the eyes and experiences of those who have suffered from widespread injustice (Brooks, 2007; Deutsch, 2006). A feminist community psychology values the importance of exploring how positions in society, including power differentials, influence

the lives of oppressed groups and has an appreciation for the role that relationships and social structures play in shaping people's experiences (Bond et al., 2000).

Contextualized understandings of human behaviour are at the core of feminism and community psychology (Bond et al., 2000; Gridley & Turner, 2005; Hill et al., 2000). Both reject conventional mechanistic and reductionistic individual levels of analyses in favour of alternative holistic approaches that examine interactions between people and their environments within the larger social context (Bond et al., 2000; Gridley & Turner, 2005; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). As such, many feminists and community psychologists apply an ecological analysis, as detailed in the previous chapter, in their understanding of social phenomena, allowing the issues marginalized groups face to be contextualized over time and across multiple levels of analyses (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Ecological models have been found to be particularly "helpful in addressing structural inequalities based on gender (Gridley & Turner, 2005, p. 368)." However, one critique of the field of community psychology is that it has failed to adequately apply a gendered ecological lens in understanding social phenomenon.

Standpoint feminists have made important contributions to criminological research by conceptualizing the experiences of criminalized women within the broader social context, highlighting the interrelatedness of gender, class, and race (Adelberg & Currie, 1987; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Comack, 2006; Gilfus, 1992). While I did not set out at the onset of the study to systematically apply an ecological framework to understand and address women's incarceration and reintegration, it was important that I included a contextual analysis of participants' experiences. Originally, I applied Freire's (1970) theory of oppression as a way to understand the experiences of provincially sentenced women in

Atlantic Canada, but found it inadequate in taking into consideration the individual capacities and relationships that affected women's experiences. Upon further reflection, I found that the ecological model, as proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), allowed me to incorporate a multi-level analysis, including an understanding of the individual, relational, environmental, and social factors that influenced participants' lives (see Chapter Six). However, I built on the ecological model by applying a gendered analysis.

Both feminists and community psychologists recognize that individuals are experts of their own lives and, as such, engage in research practices and theory-building rooted in the experiences and voices of the oppressed. In particular, qualitative research methodologies have been favoured by feminism and community psychology as a means to uncover new knowledge about the meaning and nature of the experiences of marginalized groups and to give the voices of participants a central place in the research (Hill et al., 2000; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Reinhartz, 1992; Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It was important that I used a research approach that would generate new knowledge deriving from the personal experiences of criminalized women across the Atlantic Region, as stated in their own words. For that reason, I chose to conduct an inductive qualitative study and incorporated aspects of grounded theory into my research process.

Feminist standpoint theory and community psychology reject the notion that there is one objective reality or truth (Bond et al., 2000; Hill et al., 2000). Prioritizing the voices of those who have been silenced and need to be heard opens up the space for multiple subjectivities, which is an important premise from which feminism and community psychology have been built (Bond et al., 2000). In contrast to positivist paradigms that support value-free, objective, measurement-focused practices, feminist and community

psychologists emphasize plurality – recognizing that there are multiple standpoints from which we can learn (Bond et al., 2000). I believe that criminalized women have particularly valuable viewpoints that have been largely silenced. It is my view that as opposed to making external observations and interpretations of criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration, we need to speak, understand, and listen from the standpoint of the women who have experienced such events (Bond et al., 2000).

Another reason for dismissing “objectivity,” is the argument that theory does not emerge from the data separate from the scientific observer, or more simply put, that one cannot separate themselves from her or his research. As Charmaz (2006), a proponent of grounded theory said, “We are part of the world we study and the data we collect” (p. 10).

Community psychologists, feminists, qualitative researchers, and grounded theorists argue that the ways in which we approach and conduct our research, interpret the findings, and construct theory are influenced by our values, viewpoints, personal experiences, relationships with others, and research practices. As such, transparency and reflexivity among researchers is encouraged as a means of identifying the key elements that each of us bring to our research (Charmaz, 2006; Reinharz, 1992; Ristock & Pennell, 1996).

Accordingly, in the following section, I present a discussion of my social location and the biases I bring to my research, as a means of increasing transparency.

Instead of distancing oneself and maintaining pure objectivity, feminism, community psychology, qualitative inquiry, and grounded theory encourage researchers to immerse themselves in the research through “physical proximity for a period of time as well as through the development of closeness in the social sense of shared experiences, empathy, and confidentiality” (Patton, 2002, p. 48). I agree that it is important for researchers to

engage directly or “get close” with individuals and become familiar with the research setting in order to gain a personal appreciation for and to better capture the experiences and realities of the people or situations they are studying (Patton, 2002). Accordingly, I moved to Halifax, Nova Scotia from my home province of Ontario. Atlantic Canada has been celebrated as a unique part of the country and I wanted to obtain a better understanding of the research context by actually living in the region. In addition, upon settling, I became a volunteer with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia so that I could engage with women who had received provincial sentences and had been incarcerated in Atlantic jails. Through my volunteer work, I was able to form connections with women, build trust, and engage in conversations about their personal triumphs and challenges.

Another explicit value of community psychology and feminist epistemology is to conduct research relevant to social problems and to work with individuals affected by those issues to influence social change (Brooks, 2001). As Hill and colleagues (2000) argued, “Theory is useful only insofar as it leads to action, and research is useful only insofar as it leads to practice” (p. 766). Feminist standpoint theorists argue that women’s experiences, and those of other oppressed groups, can be used to point out flaws in the larger socio-political sphere, because in order to survive they need to have an understanding of both dominant and marginalized viewpoints and the relationship between the two (Nielson, 1990). As well, their experiences then can be used to offer potential solutions to correct flaws in society (Brooks, 2007). Thus, feminists and community psychologists analyze the implications of their research and apply their findings in such a way that their work leads to real benefits for oppressed groups (Hill et al., 2000). From the inception of my research project, I set out to conduct a study where the visions and knowledge of provincially

sentenced women could be used to create changes in policies, practices, and programming that would better meet the needs of women, both on the inside and in the community. It is my belief that in order for change to be effective, it must be rooted in the voices of those experiencing the social problem. Thus, we must listen to women and learn from their experiences of criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration in order to create meaningful change. It is my hope that the findings, rooted in the voice of the women who participated in this study, will be a catalyst for social activism and social change.

In addition to the core values shared by the conceptual and methodological epistemologies that I discussed above, there was also a number of additional key principles and practices of grounded theory that influenced how I approached and conducted this research project, particularly in relation to my data collection, analysis, and theoretical understanding of the findings. In this section, I introduce the key concepts of grounded theory that influenced my research. However, in the data-analysis section of this chapter, I provide a more detailed description of how I incorporated grounded-theory concepts and practices.

While grounded theory has been criticized in the past for being rigid, positivist, and formalized, a growing number of researchers has moved away from the strict practices of its early proponents and regard grounded theory as a flexible, heuristic strategy. I view grounded theory as a framework that includes a set of principles and practices that can be adopted and adapted by researchers to help guide them through the research process. The key components of grounded theory, as summarized by Charmaz (2006), include:

1. The simultaneous participation in data collection and analysis.

2. The construction of analytic codes and categories from the data and not from preconceived deduced hypotheses.
3. The use of constant-comparative data-analysis method throughout the entire analytic process.
4. The advancement of theory-development at all stages of the data collection and analysis.
5. The writing of memos to help the researcher expand categories (e.g., specifying their properties, defining relationships, and identifying gaps).
6. The use of sampling techniques focused on theory-construction rather than the representativeness of a population.
7. The carrying out of the literature review after developing an independent analysis of the data.

In keeping with grounded-theory methodology, I engaged in simultaneous data collection, analysis, and theorizing as much as possible. However, time and travel constraints, as well as working within the restrictions of the provincial correctional system did not always allow this practice to occur concurrently. Furthermore, as a proponent of inductive practices, I did not construct deductive hypotheses at the beginning of my research based on existing theories; rather I let the data guide my analysis and theory-building. I also incorporated elements of grounded theory's constant-comparative methods throughout the entire analytic process, whereby I compared and contrasted the data to allow themes to emerge. As well, I undertook the practice of memo-writing to enhance both the analysis of the data and development of theory.

As well, as suggested by grounded theorists, I used purposeful sampling techniques aimed at obtaining information-rich participants rather than engaging in randomized sampling. In regards to conducting my literature review, although I would have liked to have followed grounded theory's preferred sequence of carrying the review out following the data analysis, I had to do a preliminary search and synthesis of the literature in order to satisfy academic program requirements (e.g., research proposal and ethics review). Conducting an initial literature review prior to data collection and analysis, however, is just one example of how grounded theory's flexibility can be advantageous.

Grounded theory was well suited for this study because it is inductive in nature. As well, this framework gives voice to the study's participants and contextualizes their experiences, allowing the data (the words of the participants) to contribute to my (the researcher's) analysis and theory development (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). Furthermore, grounded theory is very much in line with the methodological orientations of feminism and community psychology.

Research Relationship

In the following section, I describe how my social location may have influenced the research relationship, calling attention to any biases I may have brought to the project. As well, I outline the ethical considerations I took into account both prior to conducting this study and throughout the entire research process.

Social Location. Many feminists have called for researcher transparency and reflexivity as a means of revealing who the researcher is and how her location shapes the research process (Reinharz, 1992; Ristock & Pennell, 1996). As a feminist researcher, I believe that identifying my social location is paramount, because it not only provides the reader with a

snapshot of the researcher's background, but it also gives the researcher an opportunity to explicitly link her or his personal experiences with conscious decisions made about various aspects of the research process. In other words, disclosing one's social location allows researchers a venue to identify those aspects of their lives that have shaped their understanding of the research and to reveal any preconceived notions about the issue being studied. Reflexivity emphasizes the importance of researchers' self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of their perspective (Patton, 2002).

I want to state upfront my social location and potential biases in order to clarify their influences on how I approached the research. I am not a neutral, objective being. Many aspects of my life have shaped how I view the world and how I approached this study, including my sex and gender, race, socio-economic status, education, and political views,. Being a woman has had a profound influence on me and has opened my eyes to the multiple forms of sex discrimination and gender inequalities that exist in society. It has led me to want to explore the social injustices women face, especially women who have been criminalized and to work towards social change.

The fact that I am a white woman has significantly impacted me as an individual and afforded me opportunities that I may not have otherwise experienced. As a member of the dominant ethno-cultural group in Canada, I acknowledge the privilege bestowed upon me and recognize the racialization that occurs in our society today (McIntosh, 1990). Many of the women who participated in this study, as well as those criminalized around the world, are from racialized groups who have experienced oppression and marginalization based on their race, ethnicity, and/or culture. My "whiteness" may have contributed to the fact that despite talking to many women who self-identified as Aboriginal, Black, and Mixed-race,

experiences of racism were not brought up frequently during the interviews. Perhaps the women did not feel comfortable or safe talking about these issues with me. There is also the possibility that my personal experiences and biases as a white woman did not allow me to “hear” or “understand” participants’ expressions of racism. Had I identified as a member of a racialized group or hired a non-white researcher to speak with racialized women, there is a chance that I would have been able to tap into the experiences of oppression women faced based on their racial or ethnic identity, skin colour, cultural, and/or religious background.

I understand that being a member of the dominant culture places me in a position of relative power, as defined by the climate of our world today. I refuse to ignore privilege, as I believe that would be irresponsible. By acknowledging the power associated with privilege, I can attempt to minimize power imbalances by being open and honest about them in the relationships I build, both in my personal life and in my research endeavours. I will not pretend that my personal background did not affect, on some level, my relationship with many of the women who participated in this research project.

Another aspect of my social location that impacts my worldviews is my socio-economic status. Growing up in a middle-class family has provided me with many opportunities that I do not take for granted. Unlike many of the women I spoke with in this study, I have never had to worry about how I was going to find the means to buy food and clothing. I always had a safe place to sleep at night. In addition, due to the economic and emotional support of my parents, I was granted the opportunity to attend university and was exposed to a wealth of knowledge. It is through my education that I developed the capacity to think critically about the state of our world. I was introduced to feminist discourse, which deeply influenced me as a person and how I view the world. Through my education I gained the

skills and passion to do something about the injustices that women in our society face. My approach to research and in particular this study has been shaped by my educational background, including the feminist ideologies I uphold and my graduate studies in community psychology.

My political views also reflect how I view the world and shape how I approach my research. I believe that changes need to be made to traditional social orders to create a more equal distribution of wealth and privilege. I would argue that the current neo-liberal and neo-conservative philosophies that dictate much of the events in our world today have worked to marginalize more and more people, especially women, by creating unjust laws and practices that have increased the country's position on the global market at the expense of the overall well-being of the people. It is my opinion that the move away from collectivism towards individualism and the diminution of the social-safety net that followed have contributed to escalating rates of criminalization and imprisonment among women and girls. I believe that we have a collective responsibility to ensure the well-being of our fellow community members and to ensure that people are no longer criminalized for their economic and social marginalization. While I did not express my political standpoint to the women who participated in this study, I think these views shape my personal values and my actions, which inherently come out in how I approach my research, the types of questions I ask, and my demeanour with participants. Many of the women who participated in this study commented on how compassionate, non-judgmental, genuinely concerned, and easy to talk too I was during our time together, which I believe stems from the fact that I do not blame them for their criminalization, but place responsibility on society as well for the plight of women in our correctional system.

I realize that my social location puts me in a different position than many women who find themselves on the margins of society or criminalized for their vulnerabilities. I have never been incarcerated. Nor have I experienced the pain of being on the inside, separated from my family and community. I have always been an outsider on the inside. Yet, I felt a deep connection with the criminalized women whom I have met, which I cannot explain in words. As a woman, I have had to fight against many of the same oppressions these women have experienced. Perhaps it is the fact that we are *women* that contributes to this sense of connection. I have also spent a lot of time with women on the inside and witnessed firsthand the injustices of our correctional systems, which have also contributed to this connection. These experiences have led me to want to work alongside women who have been in jail/prison to eradicate the oppression that occurs in the correctional system and society at large and to work towards social change. Many of the women who participated in this study had seen me inside the jail as a volunteer, which I believe created a level of trust that may not have otherwise been there. However, for those women who did not know me prior to the interviews, many of them said that they could “just tell” that I genuinely wanted to help women and work towards correcting the injustices they have faced.

Through the women’s stories I have come to realize that my social location has awarded me a life privilege and provided me with opportunities and choices that many people do not have in their lives. Had things been different I may not be where I am today. I do believe, however, that life can change in an instant and at any given time we could find ourselves in precarious situations such as the one’s many of the women who participated in this study found themselves in. By acknowledging my privilege and appreciating the women’s experiences, I believe that I can use my social location responsibly to work alongside

women to create meaningful change. It is my hope that this project can show us that change is possible.

Ethical Considerations. Carrying out ethically sound research is important and especially so when working with criminalized women. Formally, I followed my university's *Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects*, receiving approval from the University Research Ethics Board. Furthermore, secondary ethical clearance to speak with incarcerated women was acquired from the Department of Justice (Community and Correctional Services) in New Brunswick, Department of Justice (Corrections and Community Services) in Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of Justice (Correctional Services Division) in Nova Scotia, as well as the Office of the Attorney General (Community and Correctional Services) in Prince Edward Island.

Several ethical considerations were incorporated into the research study. For example, it was essential that women be informed of the study and that I receive their consent for participation. I wanted to insure that participants thoroughly understood the research project, could ask questions, and seek further clarification on any aspect of the study. As a way of promoted research integrity by making sure that participants received an honest description of the project and could subsequently make an informed decision about their participation, I chose to read the consent form (see Appendix 3) aloud to all participants. Another reason I did this was because, in the past, consent-form language has been problematic for criminalized women, as they typically have low education-levels (Maeve, 1998).

The confidentiality of participants was also of paramount concern. After all, many of these women would be sharing life-experiences, including personal information. For some,

this would be the first time they spoke of their stories and criminalization experiences. As a means of protecting participants' identity, I asked them to generate their own pseudonyms which I would use in all written documents associated with the project. I informed participants that the name they chose could not be connected to them in any way. For example, the pseudonym could not be a street name, middle name, immediate family member's name (e.g., their child), or nickname.

As another means of promoting confidentiality (but not guaranteeing it), I asked focus group participants to protect the privacy of their group members by not sharing any of the information revealed by participants with people outside of the group. Confidentiality was also maintained by securing all identifying information in a locked filing cabinet. In addition, I stored consent forms separately from all other documents, as they had the women's real identities on them. Also, all confidential information saved on my personal computer was password-protected. Confidentiality was also promoted by primarily reporting data in the aggregate, except in the case of direct quotations. Direct quotations were used only with the permission of participants and I removed all identifying information.

Another ethical consideration I took into account was voluntary participation. I reminded the women that their participation in this project was completely voluntary. I informed participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and if they chose to remove themselves from the study, all of their information would be destroyed. However, none of the participants chose to withdraw from the study. I also made it clear to the women that as volunteers they could exercise discretion as to whether or not they answered a question without having to provide justification.

As a way of promoting fairness, I compensated participants for their time, as well as for their willingness to share their lived experiences (Hill, 2004; Maeve, 1998). As a token of appreciation, I gave the women in the community \$20.00 each. The women who were in jail received a gift bag full of miscellaneous items that included a pen, an address book, candy, a personal sized package of facial tissue, feminine hygiene products, hair elastics, cosmetics, soap, deodorant, lotion, shampoo, a toothbrush, as well as toothpaste. Giving the gift bags to the women turned out to be a rewarding experience and impacted me significantly. Not only was it touching that the women were willing to share their life stories, but their gratitude for the gift bags was at times overwhelming. Several women said that the gift items were their only personal belongings and sole possession upon exiting jail.

Beyond formal ethical concerns, the project was conducted with the feminist perspective of research as empowerment at the foundation as a mean of promoting respectful research and establishing a positive relationship with the participants (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Research as empowerment is “an approach to research that seeks to affect empowerment at all stages of the research process through critical analysis of power and responsible use of power” (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p. 9). I was conscious of existing power relations, especially within my relationship with participants throughout the entire research process and consciously attempted to minimize any potential power imbalances (Hill, 2004; Reinharz, 1992).

I was aware of my position of power and recognized the privileges I had as a white, middle-class, educated woman who has never been incarcerated. Accordingly, I dressed casually, used everyday language, and encouraged conversations with the women prior to starting the interview that were unrelated to the research project. Before conducting each

interview, I reminded participants that they were the true knowledge-holders about the research topic and that much could be learned from their lived experiences and expertise. Furthermore, while I posed questions from the interview guideline, I gave the women a lot of freedom in discussing issues important to them, which gave them the power to define their own experiences. Finally, I lessened power differentials between the participants and myself by including the knowledge and expertise of women who had been entangled within the provincial correctional system throughout the entire research process (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

As another means of being ethically responsible, I conducted myself in a sensitive manner during the interviews. I tried to be responsive to and supportive of the needs of participants during the interview process, especially when they made emotionally-charged disclosures (Hill, 2004). For example, I was open, supportive, and made every attempt to validate the women's experiences (Mitchell & Radford, 1996). Additionally, I provided participants with my contact information, as well as contact information for professionals who work with criminalized women in case they wished to further discuss any issues that came up during the interviews.

It was also important that the project be participatory and collaborative in nature. Collaborative research has been very meaningful in my past work (Bernier, 2003). Engaging in collaborative research with criminalized women has been particularly challenging because of the restrictions that the criminal justice system places on them (Fine, 2003; Hill, 2004). Conducting collaborative research proved to be challenging in this research project as well. From the conception of the idea for my dissertation, I intended to create a research advisory committee comprised of three to five women who had direct and

personal experiences with the criminal justice system. However, after numerous attempts to establish a research advisory committee, the group never transpired.

From my experience, the women's position of marginalization and subsequent criminalization significantly diminished their ability to participate in such a group. For example, the women wanted to participate, but did not have the time or resources to commit. Frequently, for women getting out of jail, they are simply consumed with trying to meet the necessary requirements for daily survival (e.g., food, shelter, employment, their own health, and conditions of their probation, etc.). It is not plausible for many women to be part of a research advisory committee due to their personal state of affairs, time constraints, and lack of adequate compensation. Unfortunately, limited funding for the project meant that there was not enough money available to pay the women for their time.

Despite my disappointment in not being able to establish a research advisory committee, I still wanted to include the voice of women throughout various stages of the project. Thus, as discussed in more detail in the following section, I met with three women separately early on in the study to receive feedback on the interview guidelines. It was easier for the women who had been criminalized to commit to a single one-on-one meeting that transpired at their own convenience and location of their choice rather than being obligated to participate in a series of meetings that spanned over several months. The individual meetings took place at a fast-food restaurant, coffee shop, and local community organization. In addition, I engaged with key informants and research participants throughout the research process to discuss the data, my analysis, and interpretations of the findings.

Data Collection Methods

My research was based on a series of qualitative semi-structured individual and group interviews. In total, I interviewed 32 women in Atlantic Canada who were either currently incarcerated in a provincial jail or who had served a previous jail term and were now living in the community. In the section below, I outline the interview guidelines. As well, I provide a description of the methods I used for data collection, including focus groups, individual interviews, and participant information sheets.

Interview Guide. Prior to conducting the individual and group interviews, I developed interview guides for both the focus groups (see Appendix 4) and the individual interviews with women on the inside (see Appendix 5) and in the community (see Appendix 6). The interview guides were comprised of semi-structured questions and probes to draw out additional information about the women's experiences based on the main research questions. The interview questions were loosely derived from the initial review of the related literature, as well as conversations with a member of my dissertation committee who was conducting a study on the reintegration experiences of women released from federal prisons, individuals from community-based organizations who worked with criminalized women, and women who had been incarcerated in the provincial correctional system. By asking these questions, I hoped to fill a gap in the literature by gaining a greater understanding of women's incarceration and reintegration experiences within the provincial correctional system in Atlantic Canada and identifying the types of support women had available to them both on the inside and in the community. As well, the questions were designed to gain insight into how to better support women from the standpoint of those with lived experience. I chose a semi-structured format, because it allowed for flexibility in

how participants discussed and defined their individual experiences. In the past, such flexibility has been particularly appropriate when interviewing criminalized women (Pollack, 2003).

The interview guides were revised throughout the research process. For example, in the early stage of my study, before conducting any of the interviews, the interview guides were reviewed independently by three women with extensive knowledge about the provincial correctional system. There were no formal criteria in selecting these women. All I asked was that they were currently living in Atlantic Canada and had been involved with the provincial correctional system at some point in their lives, either personally or in a supportive role. One woman had been incarcerated for most of her adolescence and early adulthood, another had been in and out of both the federal and provincial system, and the third woman was a staff member at a community-based organization that supported criminalized women and who herself had been previously imprisoned. All three of these women provided valuable feedback about the interview guidelines. For instance, instead of merely asking women in the community what they had needed upon returning to the community, I was encouraged to explicitly ask whether they required help meeting those identified needs and if they actually received help or not. As such, I changed the interview guide to reflect these suggestions.

Employing a semi-structured format also allowed me to make modifications to the interview guide, based on feedback from focus-group participants. As well, the guide provided the platform to make changes based on the themes that emerged from the individual interviews themselves. As an example, in the earlier interviews, women discussed issues related to stigmatization and peer support. Accordingly, I adapted the

interview guide to include questions related to these important issues so that women could be asked their opinions in subsequent interviews.

Focus Groups. The first method I used for collecting data was focus groups, which have been found to be valuable in obtaining information about the experiences of marginalized people (Pollack, 2004, 2003). Criminalized women represent “some of the most marginalized and vulnerable of all members in Canadian society” (Maidment, 2002, p. 64). It was important to provide participants with a platform to share their experiences within a group setting, as many of the women who participated in my study experienced extreme levels of gender, racial, and/or economic marginalization. I was conscious of the fact that some of the women would feel more comfortable talking about their experiences in a group of women with shared experiences, given the sensitivity of the issues being discussed, while others would prefer to share their stories one-on-one.

The focus groups were conducted at the beginning of my research project. Carrying out the focus groups first allowed me to quickly acquire a general sense of the needs and experiences of a relatively large number of women entangled within the provincial correctional system. Moreover, I was able to identify common themes that I investigated further during the individual interviews. The focus groups also functioned as pilot interviews, which allowed me to test for interview length, tone, language, style, and substance of the questions. Based on feedback from focus-group participants and my own observations, I made changes to the interview guide by expanding some of the questions. For example, in the section on preparing for release I added a question that asked if someone came in to talk with women as they were getting ready to leave the correctional facility.

In total, 10 women participated in the focus groups: five women in each of the two groups. I conducted the focus groups in two different provinces in order to achieve a greater understanding of the experiences of criminalized women from varying geographic locations in the Atlantic Region. The first focus group was carried out on April 14, 2006 in the visitation room at the Saint John Regional Correctional Centre in Saint John, New Brunswick. The second focus group was conducted on August 17, 2006 in one of the program rooms at the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Each focus group lasted approximately two hours. After completing the focus groups and using the data to modify the interview guide, I carried out the second phase of the data collection.

Individual Interviews. The second method I used to collect the first-hand experiences of provincially sentenced women in Atlantic Canada was qualitative one-on-one interviews. Researchers have contended that using the combination of focus group and individual interviews can lead to a richer understanding of participants' lived experiences (Wilkinson, 1998; Pollack, 2000; Pollack, 2003). Thus, upon completion of the focus groups, I conducted individual interviews in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the needs and post-jail experiences of provincially sentenced women in Atlantic Canada.

In addition to the 10 women who had participated in the group interviews, 22 women were individually interviewed throughout all four Atlantic provinces between September 15 and December 1, 2006. All interviews were conducted one-on-one with the exception of two related women (mother and daughter) who requested to be interviewed together. Each interview was approximately one to two hours in length.

I conducted individual interviews with women who fell into two distinct groupings. One group comprised of women who were currently incarcerated in a provincial jail. The women in the second group had received a provincial sentence, served at least one provincial jail term, and were now living in the community. I chose to interview women both in jail and in the community, because both settings allowed me to speak with women who were at different stages of their lives.

Eleven women who were in jail at the time of the study were interviewed one-on-one. They were incarcerated in one of four provincial correctional facilities: (1) Saint John Regional Correctional Centre in Saint John, New Brunswick, (2) Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women in Clarenville, Newfoundland, (3) Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, or (4) Provincial Correctional Centre in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. The correctional centre interviews were carried out in visitation rooms, program rooms, or staff offices. Interviewing women in jail allowed me to obtain a realistic representation of what was presently going on in provincial correctional facilities across Atlantic Canada.

In addition to the individual interviews with incarcerated women, 11 women who had previously spent time in a provincial jail and were now living in various communities throughout Atlantic Canada took part in the study. The community interviews were carried out in the cities of Moncton and Saint John, New Brunswick, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Halifax, Nova Scotia, as well as Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Locations for the individual interviews with women in the community included the participant's home, local probation offices, half-way houses, or in rooms provided by local organizations that support criminalized women (i.e., Coverdale, Stella Burry Corporation, and Elizabeth

Fry Society). By interviewing these women, I not only gained a greater understanding of women's incarceration experiences at the provincial level, but also the existing needs and support (or lack of) available to criminalized women in the community. Interviewing women who had been in the community for various lengths of time provided a wealth of experiences that complemented the stories shared by incarcerated women.

Participant Information Sheet. In addition to participating in either an individual or a group interview, the women who participated in this study also completed an information sheet about their personal backgrounds (see Appendix 7). It was important to gather demographic information from participants, because very little is known about the personal histories of women entangled within the provincial correctional system in the Atlantic Region. I asked the women who participated in this study to provide information about their age, racial identity, relationship status, educational background, employment history, source of income, whether or not they were mothers and the number of children they had, their charges, sentence length, etc.

I read the participant information-sheet aloud to participants before each interview,. As the women responded to the questions verbally, I recorded their answers on the information sheet. I chose to read the information sheets to the participants primarily for two reasons. For one, research has consistently shown that criminalized women often have low literacy levels, and I did not want the interviews to start off in a negative way or heighten anxiety levels if participants had difficulty reading the information sheets and/or writing their responses. Second, I wanted to make sure that the participant information-sheets were completed as fully as possible and believed the best way to achieve this was by filling them out in an interactive manner.

Just as I modified the interview guides throughout the research process, I also modified the information sheets. For example, after the initial focus group I realized that it was important to include questions about the women's expected release date if they were in jail and their actual release date if they were in the community. In addition, for the women in the community, I added a question asking them how long they had been out of jail at the time of the interview.

The information sheets provided important descriptive statistics about the demographic background of provincially sentenced women in Atlantic Canada. Statistical information that pertains to criminalized women, particularly at the provincial level, is not readily available in the Atlantic Region. One reason for the limited amount of statistics on provincially sentenced women is that information is not collected uniformly across the provinces. Additionally, even when the statistics do exist, they are often not made public. As well, it appears that the provincial correctional systems in the region do not collect a large quantity of information about the women under their care. However, the amount of information collected varies by province. I learnt about the lack of statistics in the region firsthand when I asked a correctional representative from Prince Edward Island for descriptive statistics (e.g., admissions, recidivism rates, offences, sentences and sentence length, time served, age, race, etc) on women in the provincial system over four different fiscal years. I was told either that the data did not exist or that they did not have this type of "information readily at our fingertips. It would take a major amount of time to obtain. Unfortunately, we are not able to provide this [information] to you" (Personal Communication, Case Supervisor, Female Unit, Provincial Correctional Facility, Prince Edward Island, July 17, 2007). Given the limited amount of provincial statistics in the

region, it is especially important for researchers studying criminalized women in the Atlantic provinces to collect demographic information about their female participants.

Sampling and Recruitment Procedures

It was important for me to speak to women with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Thus, I sought participation from women of varying ages, race, relationship status (e.g., single, married, same-sex partnered, etc.), geographic locations (i.e., women from different communities across all four Atlantic provinces), and who had varying types of offences and sentence lengths. Additionally, I attempted to recruit a representative number of women of Aboriginal and Black descent, as these women are overrepresented in the provincial correctional system in Atlantic Canada.

In order to obtain a sample of participants with a wide range of experiences, I used purposeful sampling (Goodwin, 1998; Patton, 2002). This sampling technique was appropriate for this study, because it led to the selection of information-rich cases to be studied in-depth (Patton, 2002). I set minimal criteria before recruiting participants. I requested that all participants be 18 years of age or older who had received a provincial sentence of less than two years. In addition, for the women who were incarcerated at the time of the study, I asked that they had served a minimum of one previous jail-term, been released into the community, and subsequently been sent back to jail. My rationale for choosing these selection criteria was so that I could speak with incarcerated women not only about their present experience, but also about their past experiences of incarceration, release, and reintegration. In the end, only one woman who was incarcerated at the time of the study did not have a previous jail-term. No restrictions were placed on the length of time women had been living in the community so as not to limit the diversity of

experiences. Length of time in the community among the 11 participants who were not incarcerated at the time of the study ranged from four months to six years.

Additionally, I used the snowball-sampling technique to locate information-rich key informants (Patton, 2002). Snowball sampling occurs when researchers ask well-situated people whom they should interview. Accordingly, I asked participants to refer acquaintances who might be interested in participating in the study. This technique proved beneficial, as it garnered participation from provincially sentenced women who may not have otherwise known about the research project. For example, by asking criminalized women to refer acquaintances, some women were reached who were not connected to support services in the community (e.g., Elizabeth Fry Society, Stella Burry Corporation, Coverdale, etc.). It was important to speak to women who were not accessing local community services, because these women provided valuable supplementary information that contributed to the diversity of experiences captured in this project.

The recruitment of participants for the study occurred in four main ways. First, I personally invited women whom I met while volunteering with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia to participate in the study. In addition, I asked both service providers and correctional staff to discuss the project with women and provide my contact information to those individuals interested in participating. As another recruitment strategy, I asked participants to pass on information about the project to any women they thought might also be interested in participating. Finally, I posted flyers throughout the Atlantic region in local community organizations (e.g., Elizabeth Fry Society, Coverdale, and Stella Burry) and services agencies (e.g., Probation Offices and Social Services) that provide

support to criminalized women (see Appendix 8). As well, recruitment flyers were posted in provincial correctional facilities (see Appendix 9).

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness Procedures

In this section, I provide a detailed description of the data analysis I undertook. Then I outline the steps I took to ensure the trustworthiness of my research findings.

Data Analysis. With the permission of the women, all the group and individual interviews were audiotaped. Then, as shortly after the interviews as possible, I transcribed the interviews verbatim. Upon completion of the transcription, I read through the interviews carefully to make sure that they were complete (Patton, 1990). Given the exploratory nature of qualitative research and my adoption of grounded theory methodology, the data collection, coding, and analysis was an ongoing process throughout the course of the research study.

For my data analysis, I used NVivo, a qualitative analysis computer software program. The program does not conduct the data analysis for the researcher; rather, it is used as a tool to aid in the quality of the analysis (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2004). While some qualitative researchers have cautioned against the use of computer-analysis programs (Kelle, 1995), NVivo was particularly beneficial as a tool to help me sort, organize, and code the large data-set (Patton, 1990). Despite the argument that using computer-analysis programs can distance the researcher from the data (Weitzman, 2000), NVivo was a catalyst in making the data accessible and manageable, thus, allowing me to stay connected to the data.

There is no single formula for analyzing data (Patton, 1990). However, there are guidelines and frameworks to assist researchers in the analysis process. My data analysis

was largely guided by grounded theory. In particular, I adopted and adapted the coding framework outlined by Charmaz (2006) in her book *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. I carried out roughly four phases of data analysis. The first phase involved reading over the transcripts in their entirety and making notes about common patterns that were emerging from the data.

In the second phase of my analysis, I used a technique called “initial coding.” The key components of initial coding includes: remaining open to the data, staying close to the data, keeping codes simple and precise, constructing short codes, preserving action, comparing data with data, and moving quickly through the data (Charmaz, 2006). As such, I went through each transcript in NVivo, compared data within the context of the interview, and created short codes (or nodes) that were spontaneous and simple. Throughout this coding phase I remained open to what the data was eliciting and paid close attention to the participant’s language. As I created each code, I attached a description of what each node entailed for future reference. Upon completion of the initial coding phase I had a total of 202 “free nodes” (see Appendix 10).

I then moved towards a more focused coding-practice to integrate and explain larger segments of the data (Charmaz, 2006). In this third stage of analysis, I used the most significant and recurrent earlier codes to sift through the large amount of data and made decisions as to which initial codes made “the most analytic sense to categorize [the] data incisively and completely” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). Throughout this stage, I used a central feature of grounded theory called comparative analysis, which has been heralded as a major strength of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000). Comparative analysis sensitizes the researcher “to similarities... and nuances of difference as a part of the cognitive exploration

of the full range and complexity of the data” (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003, p. 140). It allows the researcher to identify variations in patterns that emerge from the data and promotes deep conceptual development (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

I closely examined the initial codes and compared the data looking for similarities and differences. This part of the analysis involved constant reading and re-reading of the data found under each initial code. After reviewing the codes, I moved data around, deleting those codes that were repetitive in order to make the large number of initial codes more manageable. For example, the code “Being a Woman” was deleted and the data moved to “More Things for Men,” which eventually became “Being Incarcerated with Men,” because the participant was talking about the fact that the number of programs male prisoners received was not available to women in the same correctional facility.

As I developed more focused codes by grouping data together as relationships materialized, I also adopted another component of grounded theory called “memo writing” to enhance the analysis. Memo writing allows researchers to explore their codes, keep focused on the analyses, interact with the data, and stay involved in the research (Charmaz, 2000; 2006). By writing analytic memos, I was able to think about the research, the emerging themes, and the relationships that were building among the categories I was creating. The memos were written informally, and I used basic language to assess which codes best represented what was happening in my data, building upon and clarifying the categories I had constructed.

As I wrote memos and reflected on the data, I continued to compare and contrast the data across and within groupings, coding and re-coding it until saturation was achieved. Saturation occurs when no new information emerges and concepts are well-defined and

thoroughly explained (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). I grouped related codes into “thematic trees.” See Appendix 11 for an example of a thematic grouping that was further refined later in the analysis process. Putting the codes into thematic groupings allowed me to further organize the data and see emergent relationships among the data at a glance. Upon further revision and development of the categories, I had organized the data into six categories: (1) experiences of incarceration, (2) programming in provincial jails, (3) preparing for release, (4) leaving jail, (5) reintegration experiences, and (6) recommendations for change. The major categories were representative of the issues I was specifically interested in gaining a greater understanding about at the onset of my study. However, I did not use a preconceived coding scheme nor set out to “fit” the data into these categories. Each category contained a number of sub-categories. See Appendix 12 for an example of the sub-categories listed under the general category of “Incarceration Experiences.” Upon organizing the data into the six categories, I made summary notes to highlight what the data was telling me. See Appendix 13 for an example of the summary notes for the general category of “Incarceration Experiences.” These summaries were helpful as I approached the writing stage.

While it may appear that the analysis was conducted in distinct phases that had a marked beginning and an end, it was not that “cut and dry.” My analysis was actually a continuous process of moving through the data, comparing and contrasting it as I attempted to make sense of the women’s experiences. In what I call my fourth stage of data analysis, I constantly went back to the data as I wrote my dissertation. In contrast to early analyses where I used the qualitative software program to organize my data, however, the majority of my refinement at later stages of the process was done by hand. I would often print out

the data under a particular category or sub-category, read it over (perhaps several times), and further breakdown the information (see Appendix 14 for an example). Working with the data in this manner helped me get even closer to it and see more clearly the similarities and differences in participants' experiences in order to write a cohesive story.

Trustworthiness of the Data. While reliability and validity are used to establish the quality of quantitative studies, qualitative researchers must attend to the trustworthiness of the data. While there is no single process to evaluate qualitative research, three criteria have been found to be particularly useful in assessing the trustworthiness of the findings: (1) credibility, (2) dependability, and (3) confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). From the onset of my study I was careful to employ strategies under these criteria to enhance the trustworthiness of my research findings.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility involves demonstrating how one's findings represent the true experience of the phenomenon under study. One way to establish credibility is to seek triangulation through multiple sources and research methods (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). In this study, I used both individual and group interviews, as well as speaking to two distinct groups of women across four provinces who were either incarcerated or living in the community, all of which enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings.

Another way to increase credibility is to have prolonged engagement in the research setting. Prior to starting this project, I had studied women's criminalization for several years, as well as volunteered in the correctional setting and community supporting criminalized women. In addition, as previously mentioned I moved to the Atlantic Region and volunteered with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia to gain an

increased understanding of the research context. Furthermore, the data collection occurred over a long period of time, starting in April and ending in December of 2006.

Credibility is also more likely to be established if the findings and their interpretations are presented to the research participants. This process is often referred to as “member checks.” I engaged in various forms of “member checking” throughout the research process. For example, I gave participants a copy of their interview transcript to ensure accuracy and to make any changes they deemed appropriate. Many of the women made changes to their transcripts by crossing out quotes they did not want me to use and writing notes in the margins to further explain their points, which I incorporated into the findings. As another way of making sure that the outcomes of the research project were congruent with women’s experiences, I shared a summary copy of the preliminary analysis and a full draft of the findings with women who had been involved in the study either as participants or as key informants. The women provided valuable feedback by confirming the emergent themes as coinciding with their own experiences and observations, which contributed to the credibility of this study.

Dependability is another means to promote trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This term typically refers to the extent to which the findings are consistent and could be repeated. Dependability is usually established through a technique called “external audits,” which involves the examination of the accuracy of the findings by individuals not directly involved in the study, as well as the assessment of the interpretations and conclusions to determine if they are supported by the data. Dependability of the findings was attained through a peer review of my preliminary data analysis, including a list of the categories and themes with my advisor and colleagues. In

addition, I shared the research findings with one of my colleagues and on various occasions discussed them with scholars, researchers, and professionals whose work and interests focus on criminalized women.

Confirmability encompasses the degree of neutrality or extent to which the findings were shaped by the participants and not the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest. One way to establish confirmability is through an audit trail (Guba, 1981; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which is a detailed record of the steps the researcher took from the beginning of the project to the end. The raw data, journal entries, process notes, memos, and other documents I gathered contributed to the audit trail process. In addition, computer qualitative-analysis programs produce audit trails and increase trustworthiness. Using NVivo to aid my data analysis allowed me to create an electronic audit of my analysis process, including the codes and categories that I created.

Another technique under confirmability that increases the trustworthiness of the data is reflexivity. One means to achieve reflexivity is to develop a journal where the researcher can make entries throughout the research process that allows them to reflect on what is happening in terms of their own values, interests, biases (Watt, 2007). Throughout the entire research project I kept a journal (see Appendix 15 for an example of a journal entry), which produced an audit trail of my thoughts and personal reflections, observations and discussions with participants and stakeholder groups, ideas about the data, as well as notes on articles related to the project. The journal not only contributed to the trustworthiness of my findings, but was integral in helping me make sense of all of the information I collected, both informally and formally, throughout my dissertation journey. Writing about my experiences facilitated my understanding of the data, as well as aided my data analysis. For

example, upon completing an interview, I would write notes about main themes that were emerging and how they related to previous findings. I would then go back to the journal entries for reference during my analysis.

Now that I have laid out the methodology of my study, I move into a discussion of the study's findings. In the following chapter, I present a detailed account of the demographic characteristics of the women who participated in this project, shedding light on the personal histories of women incarcerated in provincial jails throughout the Atlantic Region.

CHAPTER THREE: DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

It was important to gather background information from the women, because not much is known about the personal histories of women in the Atlantic Region who have been incarcerated at the provincial level. This chapter fills a gap in the existing literature by providing a detailed description of the women who participated in this study. Specifically, I provide information about place of residence, age, relationship status, whether or not the women were mothers, educational attainment, employment and income, sentence length, charges and types of offences, as well as criminalization history.

Description of Participants

In order to capture the voice and experience of women throughout the Atlantic Region, I conducted interviews in all four of the Atlantic provinces. Despite an attempt to have equal representation, the number of women I interviewed in each of the four provinces varied. Specifically, 14 women from New Brunswick participated, six from Newfoundland and Labrador, eight from Nova Scotia, and four from Prince Edward Island. The disparity in numbers was largely due to the fact that fewer women were incarcerated in Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island at the time of the study, as compared to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Also, a limited budget, time constraints, and travel distances to both Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island contributed to the fact that I interviewed fewer women in those two provinces.

Of the 32 women who participated in this study, 21 women were incarcerated in a provincial correctional facility, while 11 were living in the community. In the province of New Brunswick, eight of the 14 women I interviewed were in provincial custody and six were living in the community. All but one of the women had been living in the province

prior to their incarceration. Seven participants resided in Saint John, three in Fredericton, and one participant each in Moncton, Oromocto, and Miramichi. As well, I interviewed eight women in Nova Scotia (seven incarcerated and one in the community). Yet, nine participants identified the province as being their last place of residence before their incarceration. Five participants lived in the city of Halifax, two in Dartmouth, one in Kentville, and one woman in an unspecified town in the Annapolis Valley. In addition, a total of six women from Newfoundland and Labrador participated. At the time of their interviews, four women were in jail and two in the community. The women were from various communities, including two from the city of St. John's and one woman each from Nain, Killigrews, Triton, and Stephenville. And, finally, I interviewed four women in Prince Edward Island. Two of the four women were incarcerated and all four identified Charlottetown as their place of residence.

The majority of women (25) who participated in this study were planning to or had returned to the same community once they had been released from jail. Only one participant was unsure what community she would be living upon her release. The remaining six women said that they would be moving to a different community after their jail term. The main reason for their desire to live in a different location was that many of the smaller communities from which they originated did not offer the services they required upon release (e.g., residential addiction-treatment, halfway houses, and/or community organizations that support criminalized women).

The characteristics of the women in this study largely reflected those of other criminalized women. For instance, the vast majority of participants were young women, ranging in age from 20 to 50 years old. The average age of participants was 33 while the

median was 35. The largest number of women (24 or 75%) was in their 20's or 30's. In addition, in terms of their ethnic and racial background, participants were predominantly Caucasian (72%) with seven women self-identifying as Aboriginal (22%), one as Black (3%), and one as Biracial (3%). The number of Aboriginal and Black women who participated in this project was indicative of the number of racialized women overrepresented in the correctional system.

Similar to findings from previous studies, the majority of women (66%) who participated in this research project were single. Of the single women, 13 were not currently in any type of relationship and one woman was divorced. In addition, at the time of their interview, seven women were in a romantic relationship, eight women were living common law with a partner, and three women were married. Two women in this study self-identified as being in a same-sex partnership.

Consistent with the majority of criminalized women, an overwhelming proportion of the women who participated in this study were mothers (78%). The number of children varied from one to six. Four participants had one child, 13 had two, five had three, two had four, and one woman had six children. The majority of children (66%) were under the age of sixteen at the time of the study, which is the legal age for children in Canada to live independently of their parents or guardians. Seventeen (29%) of the women's children were 16 years of age or older. One woman did not identify the age of her three children.

While previous findings have shown that children typically live with their mothers prior to incarceration, this was not the case in this study. Only nine of the 25 mothers lived with their children prior to their jail term. The majority of women (64%) had their children in the care of someone other than themselves. For example, children were often living with

relatives, including their grandparent(s), father, or their mother's current partner.

Furthermore, several children were involved with social services and either adopted or placed into foster care. It was not uncommon for children to be split up from their siblings. Many women found it difficult to regain custody or primary care of their children once they returned to the community. Only one participant out of the 11 interviewed in the community had her child living with her at the time of the study.

Unlike many women entangled in the provincial system, the majority of women in this study had higher levels of educational attainment. Sixty-three percent of participants had a grade twelve education (or equivalency) or higher. Thirteen women had their grade twelve, four had a college diploma or had taken some college courses, one woman had two university degrees, while another two women were enrolled in university at the time of the study and had completed a portion of their degree. Three women had finished grade eleven while two women had completed grade ten, four grade nine, and one grade eight. The remaining two women identified grade six as the highest level of education completed, one of whom self-identified as being completely illiterate.

Despite the fact that several women in this study had higher levels of education, the majority of participants were unemployed. Economic hardship was a reality among the women, which is characteristic of criminalized women throughout Canada. High rates of unemployment and a reliance on social assistance as their main source of income left many women facing extreme poverty. Eighteen women received income support from social assistance. An additional four women said they were receiving disability assistance. Only seven women were employed at the time of the study and three of the women were subsidizing their earned incomes with social assistance. Women were employed in

traditional female-oriented jobs including retail, customer service, warehouse laundry operations, and administrative positions. Additionally, one of the seven women employed was in an illegal profession (i.e., prostitution). One participant said that she was neither employed nor on social assistance at the time of the study because she was a part-time university student. The remaining two women chose not to identify their source of income.

While it was my intention to only include the experiences of women serving provincial sentences, three of the women I interviewed had last served time in jail for a federal sentence. Two of the women had done federal time and were now living in the community, while one woman was currently serving out her federal sentence in a provincial jail as a low-security prisoner under the Exchange of Services Agreement (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Justice, 2001). I did not know that these women had federal sentences prior to commencing the interviews. However, because these participants had previous experience at the provincial level, I decided to continue the interviews and speak to them specifically about their time in the provincial correctional system.

In terms of sentence length, 25 out of the 27 (93%) provincially *sentenced* women (i.e., those women not currently in jail on remand) in this study had sentence lengths of 60 or more days in jail (including time spent in jail on remand). Sentences (not including women serving a federal sentence or on remand) ranged from 21 days all the way up to the maximum provincial sentence length of two years less a day (see Appendix 2). The average sentence length was approximately 178 days or nearly six months. Subsequently, many of the women who participated in this study served lengthy sentences that included several months of incarceration. This finding is in stark contrast to previous research that has

shown that most women in the provincial system received shorter sentences comprising of several days, not months.

It was rare for the women who participated in this study to be incarcerated on one charge. In fact, only eight of the 32 women had been charged with a single offence. Most of the women were incarcerated for multiple charges, some upwards to 11 separate charges. In addition, the women I interviewed were incarcerated for a range of criminal offences. Few of the women I spoke with had been charged with a violent crime. For instance, only seven had been charged with assault, two for uttering threats, and one for robbery. In contrast, the majority were serving time for non-violent offences. Property offences were the most common crimes committed, which is consistent with previous research. Theft (18) and fraud (10) were the most prevalent offences carried out by the participants. Other non-violent offences included break and enter (3), impersonation (2), possession (2), prostitution (2), purgery (1), driving offences (1), public mischief (1), possession of a weapon (1), and arson (1). In addition, consistent with recent statistics, a large percentage of women (59%) were serving time for technical violations, including failure to appear in court (3) and breach of probation or conditional sentence (16).

Drug-related offences were also fairly common among participants, which is similar to previous research findings. These offences included the possession of a narcotic (3), drug trafficking (1), and unspecified drug charges (1). The charges, however, were not representative of the number of crimes related to drugs, as participants frequently reported that many of the crimes they committed were in relation to their substance addiction (e.g., theft, fraud, and impersonation). All but three of the 32 women who participated had a history of alcohol and/or substance addictions.

The women who participated had extensive histories of criminalization (see Appendix X). Only four of the participants were currently serving (1) or had served (3) their first jail-term. The majority of women (88%) had been imprisoned more than once and had spent prior time in the provincial correctional system. The number of previous provincial jail-terms among participants ranged from two upwards to 25. In addition, nine of the women had served time for a federal sentence. Six of those women had only one previous federal sentence, while one woman had two and another woman three. In addition, one woman said she had been in and out of both the provincial and federal system throughout her adult life. Furthermore, although I did not specifically ask women about their experience with the criminal justice system as youth, three women self-identified that they had been incarcerated as a “young offender” (the term used by participants).

CHAPTER FOUR: INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES

Originally, the primary focus of the study was to examine in-depth the reintegration experiences of provincially sentenced women across the Atlantic Region. However, in the initial stages of the data collection it was apparent that the women who participated in this research project needed to voice their incarceration experiences. In addition, it became evident that reintegration experiences were inextricably linked to the women's imprisonment experiences. From the women's stories, it was clear that gaining an appreciation for what women experienced on the inside would lead to a greater understanding of life on the outside. Accordingly, this first chapter of findings details the incarceration experiences of the women who participated in this study. This chapter sets the stage for a more comprehensive understanding of participants' reintegration experiences.

The Jail Environment

In speaking with participants, it quickly became clear that women in the provincial correctional system were rarely granted the opportunity to voice their incarceration experiences. Subsequently, much of the discussions I had with women focused around the jail environment and the experiences they endured on the inside. The women painted an informative portrait of life on the inside of provincial jails in Atlantic Canada. Regardless of the province where they were imprisoned, participants shared similar experiences across the region. Elements of the jail environment that characterized women's incarceration experiences included: (1) gender discrimination; (2) punishment, surveillance, and control; (3) isolation; (5) relationships; and (6) sense of security.

Gender Discrimination. According to the women's firsthand accounts, gender inequity was pervasive within provincial jails across the Atlantic Region. A male model of

corrections has permeated the design of correctional facilities and the policies, practices, and procedures that have been carried out within them since the inception of corrections in Canada (Boritch, 1997). Historically, women's corrections have been described as an "add and stir" approach. For the most part, provincial corrections in Atlantic Canada have continued to operate on this philosophy, as women have been made to "fit" within the existing male model of corrections.

One of the most rudimentary examples of adding women into the correctional system is the fact that the vast majority of provincially sentenced women in the Atlantic Region, as well as many of their counterparts across the country, are currently being housed in facilities originally designed for men (Boritch, 1997; Comack, 2000; Maidment, 2006a; Micucci & Monster, 2004). In fact, three out of the four jails I visited for this study were initially constructed to incarcerate men. The fourth, a more "modern" jail, was built to imprison both women and men, but like most provincial correctional facilities that exist today, failed to incorporate features such as those outlined in *Creating Choices* (TFFSW, 1990) into its design to better meet the needs of women.

At the time of the study, only the province of Newfoundland and Labrador had a women's provincial correctional facility. However, it had been originally constructed for and occupied by men. Despite the presence of this women-only facility, women were customarily jailed in male-dominated facilities in other regions of the province given its expansiveness. In all the other Atlantic provinces, provincially sentenced women and men were housed within the same correctional facilities. Reasons for incarcerating women and men together have been routinely attributed to the relatively small number of women in corrections and the ever-increasing expenditures faced by a correctional system that

contends with strained budgets in a region of the country that has been plagued with limited resources (Micucci & Monster, 2004).

Incarcerating women within male-dominated correctional facilities has impacted how women experience imprisonment. Units originally designed to hold men have since been designated female units, as the need for space to house women has increased over the years. Incongruity in the size of female and male living environments is instantly recognizable. Across the region, women are forced to live in smaller, more confined units than men who are given more physical space within the same institution. As Butterfly observed:

“The guys have nine units in this jail and we’ve got one...”

At one of the provincial correctional facilities I visited, women were corralled into a single, small unit. According to the correctional personnel who toured me through the jail, once capacity was reached in the female unit, women were housed temporarily in the library where they slept on mattresses on the floor until beds were once again freed.

Overcrowding within the provincial correctional system has become an epidemic not only in the Atlantic Region, but also across the entire country. Comack (2000) reported that provincial jails in Manitoba frequently exceed their capacities as well. Overcrowding at the provincial level can be attributed to the fact that more and more people are being admitted into outdated facilities not originally designed to handle the large numbers of women and men that now fill them. Based on the findings from this study, it appeared that women suffer more extensively from overcrowding than men. For instance, participants reported that although men in the same institution went undisturbed when the jail population escalated, women were frequently moved to another area of the jail or transferred to a different facility altogether. At one of the jails I visited, instead of opening the other female

unit when the main unit neared capacity, corrections simply relocated women to another facility. As participants noted:

“Every 20 women or something they are supposed to open the other unit for the women.” (Candy)

“And then the jail, they’re smart and they will ship [women to another jail] at just enough so that there is 18 or 17. They will ship them out and bring us all back over to the other side. Well, within two days there will be 20, 21 girls again.” (Butterfly)

The ill-effects of overcrowding felt by participants was merely one example of the widespread gender-discrimination vividly recounted by the women whom I interviewed. Being housed within the same facilities as men allowed women to witness firsthand the vast discrepancies in treatment between them and their male counterparts. The women vehemently argued that within the provincial jail system, prisoners were treated differently based on gender. Another example of the inequalities elicited from the womens’ accounts was the restriction of their movement within male-dominated provincial institutions. Reports of long periods of confinement within individual cells and dayrooms were consistent among the women who participated in this study regardless of where they were incarcerated. Participants argued that because the correctional system frowned upon interactions between women and men as a safety measure, the women were frequently locked in their units as men moved more liberally around the facility. As an example, while I was conducting interviews at one of the provincial jails, the women informed me that they had been segregated to their unit for several days and were only allowed out during yard,

which was no more than 20-30 minutes per day (if they actually were let outside), while the men carried on with the regular routines. As participants explained:

“The female unit’s on segregation... can’t leave out of that area... that door is locked all the time and the only time we get to go out is to go to gym or outside... the men never ever get consequences like that so... its discrimination for females.”(Ella)

“We’re not even allowed to leave the unit to eat! We have to have our meals taken to our unit to eat and the rest of the [men] go to the cafeteria.”(Sally)

Movement restrictions were exacerbated for women on remand. These women arguably suffered the most as a result of being incarcerated within a male-dominated correctional facility. Remanded women, either awaiting sentence or transfer to another institution, were not allowed to associate with incarcerated men in any capacity and were confined to their units to an even greater degree than the other women. Participants reported:

“Remands are not allowed to be integrated with the men. So we have to sit on the unit.” (Candy)

The greater limitations placed on remanded women meant that they could not participate in co-ed activities and/or programming. Unfortunately, the vast majority of programming that did exist in the provincial jails across the region was offered to both women and men at the same time. Subsequently, women on remand were restricted to participating in the rarely offered women-only programs. As the women explained:

“If you are remanded that means you are waiting to be sentenced and you are not allowed to go to programs that have men in them. So, if you are remanded you

are only allowed to go to female-only programs. So once a week the Reverend will come and do just the female church.” (Jennifer)

“I was only allowed to go to church if it was just female only. I wasn't allowed to go to AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] because I was on remand and there would be men in there.”(Sunshine)

Given that the majority of criminalized women have histories as recipients of violence and abuse, it was not surprising that the correctional system is concerned with separating the women from men in order to protect them from further trauma (emotional and/or physical). Research has shown that abuse survivors are frequently re-exposed to the powerful traumatizing processes associated with previous abuse experiences, including sexual violations by men within the prison/jail setting (Heney & Kristiansen, 1998).

However, it was clear that the need to segregate female and male prisoners caused women to endure greater limitations than men. For example, I saw that women were consistently housed in smaller units and had greater restrictions placed on their movement around the jail. Furthermore, women were discriminated against when it came to available supports in the provincial correctional system. Numerous boundaries were placed on women in terms of the number of programs they could partake in during their period of incarceration. Most programs were male-centred. As a result, the women reported that male prisoners had more services, programming, treatment options, and support available to them than women did within the same provincial correctional facility. As participants noted:

“The women get nothing, the men have everything! Every kind of program they need. Any kind of help they need. They get it! And what are we getting?

Nothing!” (April)

“It’s just disgusting and I know that women don’t get half as much privileges as the guys do.” (Charlene)

“I know the men tend to have more of that [services] set up here. They’ve got more. There’s more things available to them as far as when you’re in jail.”(Ellen)

“I think the women suffer the most. Guys have so much more.” (Charlene)

As mentioned, the majority of programming offered at the provincial level was co-ed. However, it was evident from the women’s personal accounts that in many instances women were merely “mixed into” the predominantly male-oriented programming. Even in instances where both men and women were permitted to attend the same programs, men were frequently given precedence over women. Programs had maximum capacities for participation and the women I spoke with reported that men typically had priority over women. Generally, only a small number of women were allowed to attend various programming in the jails. As a result, a disproportionate number of men were attending the programs while women were confined to their units. The following excerpt from one of the focus-group interviews clearly illustrated the gender inequalities that existed when it came to program attendance:

Marge Simpson: For school, you are only allowed six of us. That’s for the whole jail.

Butterfly: Yep, there’s allowed ten and the maximum girls there’s ever been down there is two.

Candy: Because they accommodate, they have their men and then they accommodate the women to go with it. It’s the same as AA. You guys explain AA to them. How many of us can go?

Butterfly: Five women get to go and twenty-five men get to go to the AA group.

The women were not blind to the injustices they faced. Participants were able to easily articulate the gender discrimination that occurred around them within a predominantly male-centred system. Given that the provincial correctional system in the Atlantic Region is strongly rooted in a male model of corrections, women within the system contended that they were treated as mere afterthoughts when it came to correctional practices, policies, and procedures. As exemplified by three women who participated in one of the focus group discussions, many of the injustices women experience can be attributed to the fact that they were being housed within a system that had originally been designed for men:

Candy: That's because this is a men's jail and we are just...

Butterfly: And bullied... it's a man's institution.

Candy: They've just made room for us.

Happy Gilmour: That's not our fault that we have just been made room for.

Due to the fact that the correctional system is male-dominated, women within the system have experienced high levels of discrimination. As the women from this study highlighted, the incarceration experiences of women at the provincial level have been influenced heavily by gender inequity as a result of being added into a system originally designed for men. The male-oriented jail environment has resulted in women being sanctioned to their units, unable to participate in many of the supports and programming offered within mixed-gendered provincial facilities.

Punishment, Surveillance, and Control. In speaking with the women, it was evident that the punitive nature of the correctional regime heavily influenced their incarceration

experiences. As found in previous research, the provincial facilities the women in this study were housed in were heavily oriented towards punishment and security (Comack, 2000; Micucci & Monster, 2004). In fact, in my opinion, one of the jails in the region had more security measures and control of movement than two of the women's federal prisons where I had spent considerable time visiting and volunteering. At the provincial level, women shared common experiences of confinement and were subjected to the same level of punishment regardless of the type of crime they committed (Comack, 2000). In a 1992 report, the Solicitor General's Special Committee on Provincially Incarcerated Women in the Province of Nova Scotia (SCPIW) noted that the punishment women have endured and the restrictions placed on them at the provincial level were disproportionate to the relatively minor offences that they committed. Based on their vivid accounts, women in this study felt they were being subjected to excessive punitive measures in provincial facilities across the Atlantic Region.

The aging provincial facilities in our country have led to questionable living conditions that continue to deteriorate (Comack, 2000; Maidment, 2006a; Micucci & Monster, 2004). Most of the provincial jails in the region have large barb-wired fences surrounding the property, electronic operated gates on the inside, and small cells made of concrete. These jails are in stark contrast to the newly constructed women's federal prisons that resemble small communities made of individual houses in which the women reside and a central building where services, treatment, and programming are carried out.

Participants discussed at great lengths the deplorable living conditions they were subjected to and the security measures that infiltrated their daily routines. One aspect of the jail environment that the women highlighted as being obtrusive was the surveillance

practices within the provincial system. The type of surveillance used at the provincial level was reminiscent of the “panopticism” prison setting Foucault (1977) discussed in which individuals were subjected to constant observation from a central location in the prison as a form of discipline and punishment. Current practices at the jails I visited had correctional personnel sitting in security centres or “bubbles,” as the women referred to them. From the security centres, staff had access to surveillance cameras located throughout the entire jail allowing them to observe the women’s every move. As participants reported:

“They got staff just sitting in the bubble and watch[ing].” (Vicky)

“They’re always watching behind...” (Mother Goose)

The presence of a central surveillance centre was, and continues to be, used as a form of power over prisoners and a means to maintain control of the behaviour of those being watched. Women’s experiences were impacted by the surveillance technique implemented by the provincial correctional system. The women who participated in this study felt exposed during personal and private moments. Specifically, they found the cameras in their cells to be particularly violating, especially because they were positioned within sight of the washroom facilities. Participants spoke of the debilitating emotional distress they experienced as a result of being continuously watched by staff. As Girly explained:

“You’re being watched 24/7, even when you use the bathroom. It’s so hard to use the bathroom here too!”

Participants also described the jail environment as being permeated with various forms of control. As Evans (2006) said about her experience as a political prisoner in an American correctional facility, the “guards had absolute control over every aspect of prisoners’ lives” (p. 294). Participants in this study said they were instructed when they could eat, attend

programming, make phone calls, have visitors, and go outside. The excessive use of “lock-up” was highlighted by women as being one of the major forms of control used by correctional personnel in the provincial system. Women were locked-up by correctional personnel for behaviour staff deemed undesirable. For example, Sam insisted she had been locked-up for engaging in conversations with her romantic partner while they were incarcerated at the same correctional facility:

“They [the correctional guards] wouldn’t even let us talk because we use to go together, we used to date, and we couldn’t even talk to each other. If we talked to each other, we got locked down for looking at each other...locked down for looking at each other!”

According to the personal experiences of the women who participated in this study, constant threatening of the use of lock-up by correctional staff was another way in which they exercised control over the women. Participants reported that guards routinely taunted women with the use of lock-up as a means of restricting certain behaviours. For example, Butterfly exclaimed:

“They threaten us with [lock-up] everyday. Do this, you’re locked! You don’t do this, you’re locked!”

The women reported that they could never be sure what behaviours would warrant guards to threaten lock-up. The relentless taunting by guards and burden of being locked in their cells at the discretion of individual staff members ultimately affected the emotional well-being of women in the provincial correctional system. Participants said that it was difficult to have a positive disposition on the inside when they were constantly being harassed by guards with lock-up as a measure of control:

“There is one guard in here and if you laugh too hard she shuts the TV off. She threatens to lock me. I can’t even be happy in this jail and I get in trouble, I get threatened to be locked.”(Happy Gilmour)

“You try to be happy and they beat it out of you. Not beating like physically, but I mean they just say so much lock, lock, lock... how are you suppose to be happy when they’re coming in saying that stuff?”(Candy)

Previous studies have identified the use of lock-up as being a distinct aspect of the prison regime that characterizes women’s experiences within the provincial correctional system (Comack, 2000). The personal accounts of the women in this study have highlighted the magnitude in which lock-up has been used as a form of control in provincial jails and the damaging emotional effects on women housed within them.

In addition to the use of lock-up, restricting access to the outside “yard” was another form of control exercised by correctional personnel over women. As in most provincial correctional facilities across the country, the yard in jails across the Atlantic Region typically consisted of a small outdoor area with concrete flooring instead of grass that was enclosed by a towering chain-linked fence. Women in the provincial system were entitled to receive approximately 30 minutes outside on a daily basis. Across the region, however, participants contended that yard typically constituted 20, not 30 minutes. The women also said that the guards frequently denied or limited the amount of time they had in the yard area. Furthermore, the women reported that they frequently had to argue with staff for their right to have access to the yard:

“You’re lucky if you get outside once a day for 20 minutes. Like I said [before], it’s always a fight. You have to fight with them [correctional staff]. If they don’t

have the staff, too bad, or if the staff's on lunch or break it doesn't matter! You have set times so say we're supposed to go out at two o'clock and it's five after two, they won't just take us then. It's insane." (Charlene)

"Last night I fought for us to go to yard. I did. It wasn't raining. They didn't want to take us and... I told them it was our right to go to yard. It's not a privilege, it's a right." (Butterfly)

Correctional staff had complete control over whether or not women would be granted access to the yard on a daily basis. The women in this study reported that it was common for guards to make excuses not to escort women outside even though it was their job to do so. As two of the participants noted:

"We're supposed to have yard time, but when the guards decided to take you outside."(Sunshine)

"[If] it's raining or if it's too late in the day, you know, you can ask them, but they just brush you off."(Marsha)

Due to the guards' individual discretion as to whether or not women would be granted access to the yard, participants said they were not getting outside and obtaining fresh air on a daily basis:

"We don't get outside for fresh air every day."(April)

In fact, the women I spoke with said that it was common for them to go long periods of time "without yard." In some cases, participants reported that they had not been outside for multiple weeks at a time:

“Sometimes we’re in here a week, sometimes two weeks. It’s been almost two weeks. We got out yesterday for a half an hour and it’s been a week since we were out and I’m not used to that.” (Girly)

“I was nine days in before I’d gone outside the first time and then I was another nine again before I actually... like they were long spurts before they let you outside.”(Sunshine)

“Sometimes you can be out there for a month and not get out and not get outside of the door! The only one who gets out is the one bringing out the garbage.”(April)

In many cases, participants informed me that they had been granted access to the yard on the day of their interview for the first time in several days or even weeks. For example, Mary said:

“Actually we went out today and that was the first time in almost three weeks.”

I could not help but think that their time in the yard was not coincidental with my visit to the correctional facility. I believe that not having access to fresh air on a daily basis was against the basic human rights of women and the women I spoke with felt powerless in their ability to do anything about their situation. This particular example of the deprivation of human rights among women in the provincial system supports existing allegations of the violation of basic human rights among women prisoners at the federal level (Amnesty International, 2007; Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2003a). In a 2003 report, the Canadian Human Rights Commission stated that systemic problems in the correctional system negatively affected the treatment of federally sentenced women. The Commission found that women were being discriminated against based on gender, race, and physical

abilities. For example, risk assessment tools used by CSC were resulting in women being classified as a higher security risk than necessary. Subsequently, lower-risk women were not being incarcerated in the least restricted environment.

Participants constantly worried about becoming “institutionalized” while on the inside. Institutionalization occurs when individuals internalize the norms of the correctional system. Prisoner’s thoughts, behaviours, and identities become significantly influenced by the routinization, regulation, and control of the correctional environment. Prolonged involvement in state-controlled environments such as the correctional system contributes to feelings of institutionalization (Maidment, 2006a). Institutionalization is by no means an accidental outcome of imprisonment. As Foucault (1977) argued, it is a powerful mechanism that promotes the self-regulation of prisoners’ behaviours and conformity to the prison environment. During the interviews, it was common for participants to speak about themselves and their cohorts becoming institutionalized as a result of being subjected to long-standing periods of time in the rigid jail environment. As participants described:

“It’s almost like you become institutionalized, particularly if you’ve been in [jail] a lot.”(Jess)

*“You’re being programmed to be a new human being right from the day one...”
(Ella)*

“They want us to all be institutionalized and I am institutionalized, very much so!”(Marge Simpson)

*“A lot of the girls in here are institutionalized and like myself I’m almost there.”
(Hailey)*

The women who participated in this study were particularly concerned about becoming institutionalized because it stripped them of their dignity, humanity, and independence, as well as had debilitating, long-lasting effects on their overall well-being. Institutionalization made it difficult to adjust to the outside upon release, which resulted in extreme levels of emotional distress once they returned home. Women's institutionalization experiences and dependencies on the system significantly influenced their ability to gain independence on the outside. Previous research has found that institutionalization often marked the difference between those who "successfully" reintegrated back into the community and those who continued to cycle through the system (Maidment, 2006a).

The more time women spent in provincial institutions, the more their thoughts and beliefs were influenced by the jail environment. Some women believed that jail was an acceptable consequence for their in order to pay their debt to society:

"They sent me in here... and yes what I did; I deserve to be in jail for it. I do!"(Butterfly)

"I deserve to be punished..." (Candy)

"I'm here to pay for my crimes and I've been doing that." (Mother Goose)

At the same time that women believed their actions warranted punishment, participants wanted the opportunity to make positive changes in their lives while incarcerated. The women yearned for the necessary resources and tools to address the underlying issues that led to their criminalization and continued to present challenges upon release. In simple terms, participants wanted more from the correctional system than to be punished; they wanted tangible help with the issues they faced and saw the correctional system as a place

where they could receive therapeutic treatment that was not available or accessible in the community (Bernier & Pollack, 2007; Pollack, 2008). As participants noted:

“What’s the sense of sending me to jail if I’m not going to get something out of it except punishment?”(Mother Goose)

“They are punishing us and taking our freedom, yet they are not doing nothing to prepare us to go back out to society to be a better citizen. It’s what I don’t understand about it. I know I did wrong and I’ll take responsibility for my actions, but now what help do you have to offer me?” (Jenna)

“You’re here for punishment, you’re not here to see what we [the correctional system] can do to help you not come back here again, ’cause that’s what it’s supposed to be all about... It’s none of that.”(April)

In an era of women’s corrections where principles such as empowerment, women-centredness, and shared responsibility are being espoused by the federal system, it appeared from the experiences of women who participated in this study that the provincial correctional system is still very much rooted in punishment, surveillance, and control. The findings from this study support previous findings that the provincial correctional system is heavily oriented towards punishment and security (Comack, 2000; Micucci & Monster, 2004). For the vast majority of participants, incarceration experiences were profoundly influenced by the punitive nature of the prison regime. The use of power, surveillance, and control over women in provincial jails has resulted in women becoming institutionalized to the point where their behaviour and thoughts no longer allow them to function “normally” in society. Thus, their sentences can carry on long after they have left the jail walls behind them.

Isolation. Relatively few provincial correctional facilities that housed women existed in the Atlantic Region at the time of the study. Generally, only one or two jails in each province imprisoned women. Most of the provincial correctional facilities were situated in rural areas outside the “major” city centres, some several miles away. For instance, one of the jails I visited was located in a very remote part of the province approximately two hours from the major city. The fact that few facilities exist and those that did were in rural locations, provincially sentenced women in Atlantic Canada were routinely jailed outside of their communities with great distances separating them from their families. Similar to previous research coming out of the region (see e.g., Micucci & Monster, 2004), the majority of women I spoke to characterized their incarceration experiences as being extremely isolating and lonely given the location of the correctional facilities. As Ella declared:

“You’re really cut off from everyone.”

The isolating nature of provincial jails in the region created numerous problems for women. Given that jails were frequently located outside the communities in which women resided, they rarely received visits from their families. Many families simply could not afford the expenses associated with travelling to the correctional facilities. Furthermore, as Micucci and Monster (2004) found in their study, women did not want to subject their children to visits on the inside because of the stigma associated with imprisonment and the heavy emphasis placed on security during visitations. The following two points made by Ellen illustrate this finding:

“I know there are a few people who feel like I do and they don’t want to take their children in there, so in turn they just don’t see them for a period of time, and it’s not helping anybody.”

“It was really hard to be away from them [my children and family] and I don’t believe in taking them in there [jail] to visit.”

Even if families were close in proximity and had the means to visit, the jail environment was not conducive to visitations, especially with children. The women reported that that current set-up for family visitation at the jails was often cramped, lacked privacy, and frequently occurred in the presence of male prisoners. Most of the women I spoke with were not comfortable having their children visit in such an environment, especially given that they did not know the nature of crimes of the men who were in the same visitation room. As participants noted:

“I think they should have something in place where if there is a woman in jail who has kids or a kid that there is a different situation set up so that they can still have visitation. I know a lot of people just won’t take their kids in to jail right. Nothing like sitting in a small room, especially with who’s in there!”(Charlene)

“I think the biggest one [issue] too for women is to have some sort of family. They’ve got no family visitation. Well, you can take the kids in to the regular visiting room, but you could be there with a sexual predator. That’s my biggest thing. I wasn’t going to take my kids into a room where there is 40 or 50 people and I don’t why they’re in there for. I think there needs to be some sort of a system set up for men or women with families to have their children to come in...”
(Ellen)

Many women in provincial jails across Atlantic Canada did not see their children during their period of incarceration, which is consistent with findings from previous studies that examined the incarceration experiences of criminalized women (Evans, 2006; Micucci & Monster, 2004).

Not only did the location of provincial correctional facilities make it problematic for personal visits, but it also meant that expensive long-distance charges frequently applied to telephone calls (Micucci & Monster, 2004). Given that many women had little money upon entry into the system, they could not easily afford such phone calls. In addition, the women were not paid for their work on the inside at the provincial level, which meant they could not acquire money for telephone calls during their incarceration. Their partners and extended families were often in no financial situation to incur the charges either. The women I spoke with found it difficult to maintain relationships with their families during provincial jail terms.

Paying for phone calls was not the only obstacle women faced. Participants revealed that rigid phone restrictions were enforced by correctional personnel, which made it even more challenging for women to stay connected to their families. The majority of women who participated in this study said phone-call length was limited, could only be made during predetermined time periods, and staff needed to pre-approve all numbers called. Mother Goose described the current phone situation at the jail in which she was incarcerated:

“Now it’s a big thing with the phone. No matter if the phone is being used or not, I can’t go pick up the phone, call my fiancé, and talk to him. That’s a no, no! I get 20 minutes in the day and 10 minutes at night no matter what’s going on at home. No matter what’s going on. I could be right in the middle of the

conversation and I gotta hang up and if I don't they'll turn the phone off on me and I'll be charged and my phone calls will be taken away from me."

The women said that phone calls were used by guards as another form of control, which meant that the women often lost their right to use the phone. Given the already existing barriers women faced with family visitations, restrictions on telephone calls increased feelings of loneliness and isolation. The emotional anguish women experienced as a result of being dislocated from their children was immense. Mother Goose described the emotional distress she experienced as a result of being far away from her children and the importance of being able to speak with them on the telephone:

"We're women... we have children. You know it's different for women to be in jail than it is for men..., if you ask a woman why she's desperate to use that phone and 9 chances out of 10 she'll tell ya it's cause she wants to talk to her son or daughter. Women offenders and male offenders are completely different. We're different on an emotional level; everything is completely different for us. We have children and our hearts belong to those children. We're aching for them. We want to be able to talk to them."

The emotional pain associated with being separated from one's children during periods of incarceration has been well documented in the literature (Bloom & Steinhart, 1993; Boudin, 1997; Evans, 2006; Farrell, 1998; Mayhew, 1994; Owen, 1998; Richie, 2001). Not being able to communicate with children on a daily basis made it increasingly difficult for the women in the provincial correctional system.

Given the struggles women endured in trying to maintain contact with their families while incarcerated and the emotional distance that resulted from their dislocation, women

often looked towards the other women for support. However, participants reported that correctional staff frowned upon dialogue between the women, especially among those who did not share the same cell or dayrooms:

“They don’t want any conversation whatsoever with each other.” (Ella)

“We are not allowed to talk to the others.”(Michelle)

The correctional system discouraged conversation between the women as a way to regulate their behaviour and to keep them from socializing. However, not being able to speak freely to the other women meant the women rarely had anyone to talk to on the inside:

“There is a lot of women here who don’t have anybody to talk to.” (Girly)

“There’s nobody for anybody to go talk to here at all.”(Mother Goose)

Consequently, feelings of loneliness and isolation were exacerbated even further.

The findings from this study supported those that have previously found that women experienced high levels of seclusion in provincial correctional facilities (Comack, 2000; Micucci & Monster, 2004; SCPIW, 1992). The jails themselves were located in isolated areas and participants faced numerous obstacles in maintaining contact with their children and loved ones. Although correctional staff frequently discouraged dialogue between the women, the women reported that it was often their cellmates who provided the greatest degree of emotional support while they were incarcerated.

Relationships. Not only was it difficult to maintain relationships with people on the outside, but the women found the jail environment itself made it challenging for women to have supportive, positive relationships on the inside. It was evident from the personal accounts of the women who participated in this study that relationships, or lack of, significantly impacted women’s incarceration experiences. Participants discussed in depth

the nature of their relationships between both correctional personnel and the other women. The women themselves provided the main source of support for each other. As two of the women explained:

“I found out there that the best support was from the other inmates.” (Vicky)

“We were just helping each other out.”(Girly)

The women attributed the formation of these affirming relationships to shared experiences. Participants typically formed the strongest relationships with cellmates and women in the same dayrooms, which was not surprising given that the system dissuaded them from interacting with the other women outside of those areas. For example, the only time staff allowed women from different dayrooms to come together was in the yard and during other recreational activities. I found that, for the most part, the women I interviewed formed friendships with only one or two women on the inside. As Ellen recounted:

“You kinda tend to develop a bond with some of the girls in there... there was two of the girls in there that I knew quite well and we were good friends...”

Although women could be a source of emotional support and comfort for each other, participants also said that verbal exchanges between women were often filled with tension and conflict. Cramped quarters within provincial correctional facilities meant that women were confined in small spaces, lacked privacy, and could not get away from others when they needed personal space. The women tried to maintain a thread of independence while incarcerated, but found that other women with dominating personalities used bullying tactics to maintain control over others. Personality clashes, differences in opinion, and bullying contributed largely to negative exchanges between the women. As noted by participants:

“Once they are in here they’ll get into fights, because people will push you and push you and push you and irritate you to the point where you are going to go off and fight.”(Jennifer)

“Somebody always has control over something and it’s just, you know, we’re all adults in here and it’s really pathetic. It really is! It’s worse than high school.”(Summer)

“There is a lot of bullying.” (Jennifer)

Most commonly, the women got into heated arguments over the television, some of the participants attributed these arguments to the fact that the TV was often the only thing they had control over on the inside. As participants explained:

“I’d gotten into an argument with somebody. It wasn’t really a big argument. I was watching something on TV and someone else wanted to change it. The other person didn’t get their way. I kept the TV on so I was a bully.” (April)

“Two people were fighting over the TV... Then they started fighting over the phone and then the phone got knocked down... They are childish and they fight over it. They fight over everything! There was a little disagreement last night because of a TV show.”(Girly)

Not only were relationships among the women a defining feature of the jail environment that influenced how women experienced incarceration, but so too were the relationships women had with correctional personnel. The women were forced to interact with correctional personnel given that they were in charge of their “care.” The relationships participants had with staff, especially the correctional guards, greatly impacted their daily experiences on the inside. Just as participants formed a connection with a few of the other

women, some of the participants reported positive interactions with one or two staff members:

“Some of them [correctional guards] are nice...!”(Layla)

“Three or four of the guards out there were great. They came into the cell, they closed the cell door... at the time we smoked in there even in your cell and they'd have a smoke with me and just talk away! (Ann)

It was clear that women were favourable towards guards who seemed to genuinely care about their well-being. As two of the women explained:

“There are some guards that care enough to want to help and then [there are the] ones that [don't care]...” (Butterfly)

“Some of them [correctional staff] care. Some of them actually mean what they say.”(April)

Staff who demonstrated a desire to support women and help them on the inside were viewed more positively by participants than correctional personnel who were there simply to enforce the rigid prison regime and exert power and control over them. Similarly, a previous study found that correctional officers oriented primarily toward rehabilitation, as opposed to discipline, were favoured by women incarcerated at the provincial level (Micucci & Monster, 2004). According to the researchers, rehabilitation-oriented guards undertook measures aimed at providing women with support and promoting reintegration. Subsequently, these guards were characterized by women as being nice, caring, supportive, and respected, which is similar to the positive labels used by the women I interviewed to describe some of the staff who worked in provincial jails across the region.

Similar to the personal accounts of the women who participated in this project, Micucci and Monster (2004) found that encounters with control-oriented guards, whose work revolved around maintaining control and punishing women, were frequently filled with tension and conflict. It appeared from what the women told me that the majority of guards across the region carried out their job based on a philosophy of punishment and control. Subsequently, participants regarded most of their relationships with correctional staff negatively. For most women, it was unimaginable to form any type of bond with correctional personnel:

“You don’t create a bond with guards. That just doesn’t happen...!”(Jess)

“I would never get close to one of the guards in there to talk.” (Marsha)

As in the Micucci and Monster (2004) study, the women I spoke with used negative labels to describe how they were viewed and treated by correctional staff (e.g., animals, garbage, shit, and pieces of crap). For instance, participants told me:

“I hate that place! And maybe, yah, you should hate jail anyway. You should, but you would like to be treated like a person when you are out there instead of like garbage...” (April)

“Some of these guards treat us like pieces of shit!”(Jenna)

“I find some of them too will look down on us, which I have a real problem with.”(Sally)

“Treat us like we are human beings. I’m not an animal. Don’t cage me!” (Marge Simpson)

“[W]hen you’re in... the county jails [it] is just like you’re a bunch of animals on a range.” (Marsha)

Participants said that correctional personnel behaved in such a way towards women that resulted in internalized feelings of disrespect, worthlessness, degradation, and dehumanization:

“We are totally disrespected!”(Candy)

“And they [the guards] don’t know how to talk to us anyway. They degrade us.”

(Marge Simpson)

“I’ll tell you something, these jails, these workers; nothing will never degrade me to that standard again.” (Marge Simpson)

“The thing is they [staff] don’t realize that you didn’t want to make the mistake the first time and there is no help for it. So, instead of having some human compassion, they’re like robots and they treat you like crap! And if you try, they basically, you know, if you’re home and your mom says ‘tough love,’ well that’s basically what they’re trying to give ya, but they treat you like, you know, because you broke the law that you are basically a worthless piece of crap and you don’t belong in society and basically, ‘Why should we help you?’”(Mother Goose)

Due to the fact that participants were treated and viewed poorly by staff, it was not surprising that they found it nearly impossible to form relationships. In addition, the women argued that a lack of trust and confidentiality further limited their abilities to have any type of relationship with correctional staff. Given their experiences in such an environment, most women were distrustful of anyone who worked within the provincial correctional system. As Butterfly said:

“There is no trust between the inmates and the staff. None! They don’t care!”

Participants disclosed in their interviews instances in which they had revealed personal information to correctional personnel and had their confidentiality broken. Subsequently, even if women wanted to confide in staff, they were fearful that what they disclosed would be publicized. The women sensed that staff frequently shared private information about the women with fellow correctional personnel and some even reported overhearing them speak to staff members about other “inmates,” which generated an atmosphere of distrust. As two of the women revealed:

“They all talk amongst themselves. There’s no confidentiality at all! I don’t feel that there is. I wouldn’t tell the guards anything. Nothing!”(Sally)

“No, you don’t talk to the guards like that. And [name of staff member] is supposed to be the one that you can go to talk to, but the shitty thing about her is that she’s not confidential... Nothing is confidential, which sucks, you know.”(Mother Goose)

The findings showed that it was difficult for women in the provincial correctional system to form meaningful relationships on the inside. While some participants were able to form bonds with one or two of their cellmates, most interactions between the women were filled with tension and conflict. As we saw in the previous section, women experienced isolation and loneliness while incarcerated, because it was difficult to maintain relationships with their loved ones. Not having supportive relationships on the inside where women could confide in someone further exacerbated their feelings of loneliness. Furthermore, the interactions participants had with guards were often emotionally damaging, which caused the women to internalize negative labels and feelings about

themselves. The lack of trust women had in correctional staff frequently caused women to deal with their experiences in solitude.

Sense of Security. Despite the provincial jail system being a punitive environment and regardless of the negative aspects of imprisonment that participants discussed throughout their interviews, several women commented on the fact that jail was often a place where they felt safe:

“Jail kind of gives you a sense of security...” (Ellen)

“[E]ven though you want to come out of jail there is still that sense of security of the safety net.”(Sunshine)

“It [jail] becomes sort of like their second home... there’s girls who have been here like 10, 20 times because they have a safe environment. Its structure, its routine, and it’s things that they don’t get on the outside.”(Jennifer)

In jail, the women had a roof over their head and did not have to worry about finding money for rent or food. For a period of time, women could be free of the chaos that occurred in their everyday lives on the outside. As participants explained:

“In here I don’t have to stand in voucher line. I don’t have to stand in a soup kitchen line. I don’t have to worry about given nobody my social insurance number. I don’t have to worry about nothing!” (Marge Simpson)

“Even though jail is jail, when you’re there you don’t pay bills, you don’t have that you know, you know where you’re going to be sleeping that night and that sort of thing.”(Jess)

Similarly, personal accounts from other women in provincial jails have shown that, for some women, jail has become a safe place where they can be away from their violence-

filled lives (Comack, 2000). Jail also provided women with a sense of familiarity and comfort they have not experienced on the outside (Maidment, 2006a). Ironically, for many women, jail has become an environment where they feel most at home. It was not particularly surprising that women felt safer in jail given the extreme levels of poverty, violence, and social exclusion they experienced in the community (Pollack, 2008). Their vulnerability on the outside and constant struggle to survive has resulted in jails being one of the only places in society where their basic needs can be met. For many of these women, society has failed them and their existence within it has come at a great cost.

Supports Available to Provincially Sentenced Women on the Inside

Just as the women painted an informative portrait of the jail environment, participants provided valuable insight into the programming, services, and supports available in the provincial correctional system across the Atlantic Region. Based on participants' vivid personal accounts, it was clear that little uniformity existed in the types of programming, services, and supports offered throughout the region. Most of the women reported an inadequate amount of service provision at the provincial level that failed to meet their needs. Consequently, many of the discussions I had with the women centred on the gaps in services. I categorized this information into three main themes (1) programming and services provided by the correctional system itself, (2) programming and services provided by community-based organizations coming into the jails, and (3) release planning and support.

Programming and Services Provided by the Correctional System. The division of correctional responsibility between the federal and provincial governments has resulted in major disparities in programming and services in correctional facilities across Canada

(Micucci & Monster, 2004). While it appears that a degree of uniformity exists at the federal level, the same cannot be said for provincial corrections. Under the care of Correctional Service Canada, all federal prisons for women are mandated to offer similar core programming specifically designed to better meet the needs of criminalized women. I am aware, however, that just because the policy rhetoric of women-centred programming exists at the federal level, it does not mean it necessarily meets the needs of criminalized women. In fact, many researchers have argued that federal programs fail to adequately support women (Hannah-Moffat, 2004a; Hannah-Moffat, 2000; Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2000; Kendall, 2000; Kendall & Pollack, 2003; Pollack, 2006, 2007, 2008; Pollack & Brezina, 2006; Pollack & Kendall, 2005). However, the point is that the policy rhetoric does exist at the federal level and not at the provincial. At the time of the study, core federal programming included: (1) Women Offenders Substance Abuse Program (WOSAP), (2) Education and Employment Programming, (3) Programs for Survivors of Abuse and Trauma, (4) various Parenting Programs, and (5) the Social Integration Program for Women, which provides women with pre-release reintegration support. In stark contrast, no core programming existed at the provincial level. The absence of a single governing-body at the provincial level has contributed significantly to an inconsistency in policies, regulations, and services in Canadian provincial jails.

Very little detail is known about the specific types of supports, services, and programming available to women in the provincial correctional system. For the most part, there is a major shortage of provincial programming and that those that do exist fail to adequately meet the needs of women (Comack, 2000; Maidment, 2006a; Micucci & Monster, 2004; Smith & Parriag, 2005; SCPIW, 1992; Vir Tyagi, 2004). In the Atlantic

Region, academic and community-based research examining the experiences of criminalized women has shown that few programs exist at the provincial level (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005; Maidment, 2006a; Micucci & Monster, 2004; Smith & Parriag, 2005; SCPIW, 1992).

There was an overwhelming response from the women who participated in this project that the provincial correctional system itself failed to provide adequate support to the women under its care. It was clear that there was a significant shortage of programming, services, and treatment options in provincial jails throughout the Atlantic Region to address women's needs. When I asked participants about the types of programming they received from the provincial system during their period of incarceration, the most common response was "none:"

"There is nothing in this institution!" (Candy)

"[Y]ou can't get any help throughout the jails at all!" (Layla)

"[I]t was really bare in terms of programming and services offered." (Daisy)

"[T]hey'll have a program here and there, but they don't have very many programs at all!"(Hailey)

"[T]hey give you no help inside."(Sunshine)

"[T]here is no programs offered for women here [at the jail]."(Mother Goose)

While I expected participants to report that the provincial system did not provide an abundance of support based on the findings from previous research, I was shocked by the degree to which the women said programming was lacking in provincial jails across the region.

The only program that was consistently offered at all of the jails I visited was educational upgrading. Participants throughout all four provinces said they had the opportunity to advance their education through correctional educational programming:

“[T]hey offer continuing your education here.”(Jennifer)

“They have the school here. It is twice a week.”(Jenna)

“I was doing school inside...” (Hailey)

“The only thing I got out there was school. That’s it!”(April)

However, for those women who were incarcerated in the same correctional facilities as men, the classrooms where educational programming transpired were co-ed. At the provincial level, “school” typically consisted of core units towards a GED. Any educational upgrading beyond that was not available or provided only through correspondence for which the women had to pay themselves. Most of the women faced extreme levels of economic hardship before their criminalization, which was exacerbated once they were in jail. Therefore, they could not afford to pay for educational courses.

Except for educational upgrading, correctional programming for women varied immensely across the region. The quantity and quality of support provided by the correctional system itself differed throughout the four provinces. Programming provided by the provincial system was contingent upon resources at each individual correctional facility. As a result, the type and amount of programming, services, and support women received on the inside was dependent on the jail where they were incarcerated. For those jails located in remote areas, such as the women’s correctional facility in Newfoundland and Labrador, the women said that few programs existed because there was a significant shortage of professional agencies available to provide services within the correctional facilities, which

is consistent with previous research coming out of the province (Maidment, 2006a; Micucci & Monster, 2004).

Very little personal development programs existed at the provincial level. Only a few participants said that they had taken workshops or short-term courses on topics such as addiction, anger management, and/or relationships while incarcerated at the provincial level. Of the participants who took these courses, the women said the programs were merely offered sporadically. As Hailey said:

“They do anger management once every couple of months....”

Women could only benefit from these workshops if they happened to be incarcerated at the same time these programs were being offered. Furthermore, the women who were interviewed said that correctional guards often ran the workshops, which participants said were merely brief, introductory modules that were not very valuable:

“[T]he programs that they have here are basic introductory addiction programs [and] introductory anger management.”(Ella)

“[B]asically we only get a brush with the programs in jail.”(Ann)

“The last time I was in there they had someone doing a relationship course, but it wasn’t structured. It wasn’t any information about relationships. You went from a book called ‘In Pursuit of Happiness.’” (Charlene)

Participants argued that these short-term, introductory courses were ineffective and failed to meet their needs. In addition to a limited number of programs in general, there also appeared to be a lack of culturally relevant programming, services, and support for women at the provincial level. Despite the fact that nearly one-third of the women interviewed had

self-identified as Aboriginal, Black, or Biracial, not one participant in the entire study identified any type of cultural programming in the provincial jail system.

Given that few programs existed at the provincial level, the discussions I had with participants focused largely on identifying service gaps within the system and the challenges women faced in accessing available services. For instance, the women talked profusely about the shortcomings of provincially-run services such as addiction support, counselling, mental health services in general, and health care. For the most part, women were highly critical of the services offered by the correctional system and found them to be of little benefit.

One of the major concerns women highlighted was the significant lack of addiction support available to women in provincial correctional facilities. The majority of women in the provincial system had addictions prior to their criminalization (Shaw, 1994a; Smith & Parriag, 2005; SCPIW, 1992; Vir Tyagi, 2004). All but three of the women I interviewed had severe and persistent alcohol and/or substance addictions that they desperately wanted to address during their period of incarceration. However, the majority of women reported that they did not receive any kind of addiction support on the inside. And, if addiction services did exist, they were limited and offered infrequently.

Despite an overwhelming response by participants that no addiction support was offered by the correctional system itself during their time in jail, a few of the women who were interviewed said that provincial corrections had begun implementing the Women Offenders Substance Abuse Program (WOSAP) at some of the jails in the region. As outlined at the beginning of this section, WOSAP is the core addictions program developed by Correctional Service Canada and implemented at all women's federal correctional facilities.

At the time I conducted the interviews, I was unaware that the program had been adopted by some of the provincial correctional facilities. A couple of the participants said they had or were in the process of completing the WOSAP course during their provincial sentence:

“I done the WOSAP course here.”(Girly)

“I’m doing WOSAP right now, which is the relapse prevention maintenance program. They usually use it for federal people, but people in the provincial jail are doing it now so I’ve just started that.”(Sunshine)

There seemed to be a lot of “buzz” surrounding the WOSAP course while I was conducting the interviews. However, based on the personal accounts of the women who took the program, or were waiting to take it, several operational problems interfered with implementing WOSAP at the provincial level. For instance, at one of the jails I visited, a staff member had been trained by Correctional Service Canada to teach the WOSAP course, but she told me that management had not given her authorization to start the program. Additionally, a few participants said they had been promised a spot in the program over and over again, but that the start date had been postponed on a number of occasions and, at the time of my visit, had yet to take place. Furthermore, because WOSAP was an extensive program that spanned over several units, participants noted the restrictions that placed on who could participate in the program. For example, women who were serving shorter sentences would not be eligible. Mother Goose described the current situation with the WOSAP program at the jail in which she was incarcerated:

“Right now they’re talking about doing the WOSAP program for women, and they can only offer that to so many women, and they’ve done the first one not too long ago. It’s just basic eight sessions. The thing about it is, say you are in

for two to three months, that doesn't even apply. The WOSAP's not going to apply to you because it's 40 sessions long, right, and it only goes from Monday to Thursday in the morning time. So if you are in here serving a two month sentence you are not going to be able to take advantage of that, and it can only be offered to so many people... So, basically you got to be doing quite a bit of time in order to get any programs in here."

Subsequently, while some of the provincial correctional facilities may have taken steps towards implementing an addictions program specifically designed for women, the WOSAP program may not prove beneficial to most women serving provincial sentences.

In addition to identifying a short supply of addictions services in provincial jails across the Atlantic Region, participants also noted a shortage of withdrawal support for women coming into the provincial system with severe addictions. Participants said that forcing women to quit "cold turkey" without supervised medical care was grossly inhumane. Over and over, women reported that they were violently ill and experienced severe emotional and physical distress as their bodies detoxified without medical aid:

"The women who come in here, when they go cold turkey, they just go through hell." (Jennifer)

"You're so sick too! Like the nurse, she wouldn't even give me Advil. She wouldn't give me anything! Like you're so sore and it's just crazy!" (Layla)

The women I spoke with considered themselves "lucky" if they were given over-the-counter medication, such as Tylenol or Gravol, to ease the intense pain they experienced. Most participants said they had to plead with the correctional guards and/or nurses to give them over-the-counter medication. However, the women said their requests were usually

denied. Subsequently, participants said that women were left on their own to suffer through the pain without even minor pain-relief medication. A few participants stated that they had witnessed the death of women who did not receive proper medical attention as their bodies went through withdrawal. Sunshine vividly described her experience of “coming off the drugs,” which closely resembled the stories of the other women who participated in this study:

“When I went inside I was coming off IV Dilaudid, IV cocaine, crack cocaine... those are what I was using primarily. I was really sick for one thing. I was malnourished. I was on antidepressants and anti-anxieties along with it. And when I went inside they gave me ibuprofen, if the nurse had ibuprofen to give it to me, and Ensure whenever they had it, and that was it! Nothing else! It didn't matter! I think I got a Gravol once, because I was up throwing up all night being sick, but if they didn't see the puke in your toilet they don't give you the Gravol. You're cold turkey in there and basically you're coming off drugs with no, no help whatsoever! It's not a very pleasant experience!”

The lack of addiction-support women received in Atlantic provincial jails was not surprising. Previous studies have noted significant service gaps in addiction programming at the provincial level (Smith & Parriag, 2005; SCPIW, 1992).

In addition to much-needed addiction support, participants also illustrated a crucial need for meaningful mental health counselling (e.g., trauma and abuse, depression, etc.) within the provincial correctional system. The vast majority of criminalized women suffered from histories of trauma and abuse (Shaw, 1994a; SCPIW, 1992; Vir Tyagi, 2004). Reports have

consistently shown that a large percentage of women in provincial corrections have serious mental health issues (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005; Maidment, 2006a; Shaw, 1994a; SCPIW, 1992). Nearly all of the women who participated in the study self-reported that they had experienced violence and abuse in their childhood and as adults and expressed a need for therapeutic services on the inside to address their mental health concerns. However, most of the women reported that despite an overwhelming need, meaningful one-on-one counselling was not available at the provincial level:

“One-on-one support would be nice, but it’s not there.”(Kelly)

“I got some thoughts in my head and I don’t want them thoughts in my head. If they would help me look on a brighter side or send anybody in here to see me... even a psychologist!”(Marge Simpson)

Participants said that some of the jails in the region in theory offered women individual counselling. However, in practice, it turned out that the women faced numerous obstacles in gaining access to correctional psychologists, psychiatrists, and/or counsellors. Participants said that the referral process was lengthy. Furthermore, once granted their referral from the medical doctor, women often waited long periods of time to be seen by counselling services. As Mother Goose said:

“I still haven’t had an actual one-on-one session. She just met me today. It’s two months later.”

Similarly, Maidment (2006a) found that lengthy waiting lists made it difficult for women to access psychiatric services in the provincial correctional system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Even when counselling was made available to women, it typically consisted of one session every two weeks. It was not uncommon either that women went several weeks without seeing their counsellor. Many of the women argued that they needed more frequent, intense support to help them deal with the complexity of their issues, especially given the fact that at some of the institutions, women were offered mental health *or* addictions counselling; not both. As Jody noted:

“You got mental health... that’s when they come in! I’ve seen the mental health worker here once and I haven’t seen her no more, it’s been a long time. So that is quite actually not too good. They have drug addictions here, but you either see one or the other.”

Given that many of the women had addictions because of issues related to their mental health (e.g., histories of trauma and abuse), many found that having access to only one type of counselling did not meet their needs. The women said that the counselling services that currently existed in the provincial jails in the Atlantic Region were inadequate.

In addition to identifying a lack of counselling, participants also said that mental health services in general were absent in the provincial jail system:

“There was a huge, huge lack of mental health services...” (Daisy)

“I mean they had programs coming in like NA if you had addictions that would be beneficial, but if you didn’t and it was simply, solely a mental health issue then you were up the creek without a paddle (laughs) basically!” (Daisy)

Previous research from the Atlantic Region has found that there was a lack of appropriate responses by correctional staff in dealing with women suffering from mental illness (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005; Maidment, 2006a). The women

who participated in this study contended that correctional staff did not have adequate training to attend to the unique needs of women with severe mental-health issues:

“To have concern for women's mental health and not have staff yuck it up to “Oh just snap out of it!” Those are the attitude and what you face every day. There is no support network.” (Daisy)

“They don't know how to deal with it [mental illness] there. They really don't! I think they need somebody out there that can deal with the MHA's [Mental Health Acts]. I think they need, like, they definitely need somebody out there because they're treatment is not... they're treated like animals is what they're treated like.” (April)

“The concern was real and obviously... you have to deal with a lot of people, women as well, women officers as well, who do not have a clue about women's issues, especially as they pertain to mental health, your children, being separated from your child and what that alone can do to your mental health.” (Daisy)

Similar to these findings, Maidment (2006a) found that staff was ill-equipped to deal effectively with mentally ill prisoners. It is common for staff to perceive women who suffered from mental health issues as difficult to treat (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005). Participants reported that women with mental illnesses were frequently locked-up because they were seen as “difficult” and spent most of their time in jail in isolation. April vividly recalled a situation she had witnessed while incarcerated at the same provincial correctional facility as a young girl with severe mental-health issues:

“She had stopped her medication because it made her feel funny, so she refused to take it. They locked her in her room until you decide to take your medication.

She decided not too and she was so bad she was putting food in her hair, throwing stuff around. In the meantime, she was locked down, this was, I think she was in that room I bet ya six, seven days getting out scatter a little bit here and there. Seven days! Anyway, finally she had all this stuff in her hair, all food, so they said 'You know what? You're not going to take your medication; we'll take you out of here!' So she thought she was getting out of there all together. She got into worse. They took her to the lock-up. There was a guard down there seeing all this stuff in her hair. They cut her hair, up here, down here! What a state the poor girl was in when she came back. They kept her locked in a cell, a little tiny cell until she decided to take her medication. She was not allowed to refuse it. All the while she was doing that we weren't allowed out [to the yard]. Not allowed out! If they went to take us out she banged on the door, everybody came back in. We might have got five minutes if you got that! All the while she was locked up!"

Many of the women I spoke with showed grave concern for the treatment of women with mental health issues incarcerated in the provincial system. Many of the women who participated in this study thought it was unsuitable to have mentally ill prisoners within the general population, which was also a shared belief among the women Maidment (2006a) interviewed in Newfoundland and Labrador. Most believed women with severe mental health issues did not belong in provincial jails in the first place. The lack of appropriate treatment for women with mental illness was a source of frustration and emotional anguish, not only for those suffering with the illnesses, but also for the other women around them. As well, Maidment (2006a) found that women in the general jail population found it exceptionally difficult to live amongst women with severe mental health issues. Participants

in this study also talked about the emotional discomfort, and lasting effects, of watching other women treated poorly because of their mental state:

“The thing that bothered me the most in [name of jail] was the treatment of the MHA’s (Mental Health Acts). I think it needs to be looked into more.” (April)

Another deficiency in the system itself that women frequently spoke about during their interviews was the general lack and poor quality of health services. Most participants were highly critical of onsite medical care in provincial jails:

“[T]hat’s another thing within here, the healthcare...it’s terrible!” (Jenna)

“[T]he healthcare system in here is pathetic anyways. It’s pathetic!”(Sam)

For the most part, participants reported that physicians were only onsite once a week. Given that medical professionals were not present in the correctional system on a daily basis and women had to submit written requests to see the doctor. As Jess said:

“[T]he doctor came once a week. If you needed to see the doctor then you would put in a request.”

Furthermore, not having a permanent doctor onsite meant that the weekly waiting list was long and women were frequently turned away week after week. The following excerpt from Summer’s interview highlighted the challenges that women faced in their attempt to receive medical attention while incarcerated at the provincial level:

Summer: I’m supposed to be on the list today. I asked the nurse this morning if I was going to get to see the [doctor]... she said there is 16 people on it now. [I’m] sure people are going to get moved off again today!

Jenn (Interviewer): So you put your requests into the nurse to see the doctor?

Summer: Oh yeah! Like every day!

Jenn (Interviewer): How long have you been here?

Summer: Almost a month and I haven't even seen the doctor!

Seeking medical attention was often a humiliating experience for many of the women. For example, it was mandatory for a correctional guard to be present during appointments. As Mother Goose reported:

"[W]hen you see a physician here, the guard is in with the physician at all times."

The women felt that having a guard present was a violation of their privacy. Correctional guards, as well as the medical staff, were often men (SCPIW, 1992). Many participants went untreated for specific medical issues, because they found it embarrassing to talk about personal medical concerns in front of men, especially those issues specifically related to women's health. Furthermore, women did not disclose serious medical issues to the doctor because the guards who were present during appointments seldom kept the women's medical histories in confidence. The women said they did not want others to know about their health problems. Therefore, participants often kept their health concerns concealed from staff and frequently went untreated. As Mother Goose explained:

"There's a woman here now, I know for a fact she has genital herpes and she won't be treated for it because of the fact that the guard's in the room. So she's going to not being treated, because she knows the guard's going to know about it and the rest of the guards [are] gonna know about it. Therefore, she won't go get treatment."

Negative healthcare experiences were exacerbated by the fact that women felt that medical staff did not take their health issues or concerns seriously. Healthcare providers repeatedly questioned the legitimacy of women's ailments. As Charlene noted:

“They have a nurse and a doctor [onsite], but good luck with that! They don't believe anything you say. It doesn't matter!”

As an example, one participant explained in her interview that she had been accused by staff of “scamming” the correctional system for a pair of eyeglasses, which she legitimately needed due to glaucoma. The woman said her battle to acquire proper medical care was a demeaning experience, because she was made to feel like a liar by correctional staff. Previous studies have also shown that women were treated with little respect or dignity by healthcare professionals in provincial jails (SCPIW, 1992).

Not only did women have to self-advocate for proper medical provision for ailments that arose once they were in jail, but participants also said they had to demand, often with no avail, to receive medications they had been prescribed on the outside. Women reported that physicians at provincial jails frequently denied women access to medications they were on before being incarcerated:

“[I]f you come in here on prescriptions or on medications, they don't give them to you anyways!”(Butterfly)

“I wanted to go back on my antidepressants, but he [the doctor] wouldn't put me on the antidepressants, because he wouldn't be able to follow me in the community.”(Sunshine)

One participant stated that women were “cracking up,” because they were not getting their appropriate medications. Vicky's struggle illustrated how difficult it was for provincially

sentenced women to obtain their medications and how being on new medications prescribed by onsite physicians affected their mental and physical well-being:

“They won’t give you what you need... Let’s say you’re on Valium, or something like that, and you’ve been on them for years and they cut you off totally! They wouldn’t even let me take Prozac and I have been on that for three years straight and I was taking it every day and they wouldn’t allow me... even prescribe that for me! They prescribe you these mummifying pills that turn you into a zombie. Make you an insomniac. All they do is...you don’t know which way you’re coming or which way you’re going!”

Not only did healthcare professionals decide what prescription medications women were allowed to use, they also controlled the use of over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen:

“[I]t’s hard to even get Tylenol or Advil. It’s this big ordeal.” (Charlene)

“I’m in a situation now where I’m not allowed to have Tylenol. I have to write the doctor to ask her permission to have Tylenol!” (Candy)

Participants were frequently deprived of minor pain relievers for headaches, toothaches, menstrual cramps, upset stomachs, and minor muscle aches. The women found having to plead for medication to be both a maddening and humiliating experience. Furthermore, women needlessly suffered from severe symptoms from legitimate illnesses that they were diagnosed with on the outside, because they were refused proper medical attention on the inside:

“I have kidney problems and if I’m out on the outside I get narcotics and stuff to help my pain and I’m not addicted to it or nothing. They wouldn’t even give it to

me. They wouldn't even look at me! They wouldn't even give me Tylenol! So if I have a headache, I don't get nothing! I suffer!"(Girly)

The reportedly poor healthcare participants received at the provincial level across the Atlantic Region supported previous research findings from Nova Scotia, which showed that provincially sentenced womens' medical needs have been dealt with inadequately in the past (SCPIW, 1992). Furthermore, this study confirmed findings that identified service gaps in addiction programs, one-on-one counselling, and mental health services in provincial jails across all four Atlantic provinces (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005; Maidment, 2006a; Micucci & Monster, 2004; Smith & Parriag, 2005; SCPIW, 1992; Sweet, 2003). The women were highly critical of services offered by the correctional system itself and of the fact that little support was provided to women by provincial corrections in Atlantic jails.

Alarmingly, the lack of support women received at the provincial level caused many to view the federal correctional system as a viable alternative to provincial time. Many of the women I spoke with had turned a favourable eye towards federal time, because they believed that the programming, services, and treatment they needed to address the underlying issues that led to their criminalization were available in the federal system. For example, participants said that federal corrections provided women with mental health support, individual counselling, addiction treatment, diverse programming, and adequate healthcare. Desolate conditions and lack of programming, services, and support in the provincial jails made federal prison much more appealing. As participants explained:

“There’s a lot more programming with federal systems that it’s silly that the provincial... there’s nothing going on whatsoever. A lot of people that are in there are just sitting there doing dead time.” (Ellen)

“I would actually rather be in the federal system because if I were in federal right now I’d get my program, I’d get more freedom.”(Mother Goose)

“[A] lot of girls want to go to federal just to get the programs.” (Hailey)

“[I’m] requesting the judge sentence me to the federal institution because there they have programs and they have counsellors and everything else that will help guide me...”(Candy)

Many participants referred to this alarming trend as “going federal,” which is a term Maidment (2006a) also found in her study with provincially sentenced women in Newfoundland and Labrador. The women argued that they would rather “go federal,” because the provincial system did not offer women any support. Subsequently, women sought federal sentences in hopes that they would receive the help they so desperately wanted. In fact, program availability was most frequently cited as the main reason for participants wanting to serve federal sentences.

Some of the participants I interviewed had considered and even requested federal time for crimes that would not normally warrant federal sentences in order to get out of the provincial system and have greater access to programming. Requests for federal sentences to gain access to programming have also been documented among criminalized women in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (Maidment, 2006a; Sweet, 2003). Legal counsel and judiciary often supported criminalized women in their request for a federal, rather than a provincial, prison term so that women could receive addiction and mental

health support. Candy explained why she wanted to “go federal” and provided her rationale for why the judge would rule in her favour:

“[I]f I request it [a federal sentence] and let the judge know that there’s nothing in this institution that can help me to reintegrate back into the community, he will send me there. He will send me to the federal institution. I could stay here [at the provincial jail], but there’s nothing here that’s going to help me prepare to go back out into the community and not back into the life I was in.”

The grave conditions women were forced to endure in many of the provincial jails caused them to sacrifice shorter sentences in order to do their time at NOVA, Atlantic Canada’s federal women’s correctional facility. In addition to pleas for longer sentences for relatively minor offences, participants also reported that they themselves, as well as many of their peers, were actually going out and committing more crimes, or more serious crimes, to get the federal time:

“I see more and more women are going out and doing the federal crime so that they can go there... You got women going out there committing crimes to get years of a sentence just to get help. It’s crazy!” (Candy)

“[Y]ou’ll do an extreme to get there [NOVA], which is scary!”(Sunshine)

*“So, basically you had to commit more crimes in order to get the better end of it.”
(Mother Goose)*

Many women believed life on the inside would be better in a federal prison than in a provincial jail:

“I’d rather do federal time and get more time than go back there [provincial jail].” (Layla)

“[I]t was very evident that a lot of women were pleading guilty against legal counsel... they can't take it here [at the provincial jail]. So, they instruct their lawyers to get a hearing and I'm pleading guilty, send me to NOVA to get me out of there. So, people are making huge, dire consequences... decisions about the quality of their life and the impact this is going to have, [just] to get the hell out of there!”(Daisy)

Given the generally deplorable living conditions and lack of support within the provincial system, it is not surprising that the idea of a “therapeutic” prison is particularly appealing to women who have been caught up in provincial corrections, even if it means enduring a longer prison sentence. Doing “dead time” in the provincial system and being exposed to the treatment rhetoric that permeates current carceral discourses has caused women to believe that federal prisons would ultimately benefit them (Bernier & Pollack, 2007). Regardless of their need for treatment, it is particularly alarming that women would request federal sentences, because it means they would likely spend more time in prison than they would in the provincial system. While similar stories of women in the provincial system “pleading up” to federal offences have surfaced in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, this is the first study to identify this trend across the entire region. In addition to highlighting programming and services offered, albeit limited, by the provincial correctional system itself, the women also spoke about support provided by community-based organizations during their interviews.

Programming and Services Provided by Community-based Organizations. Based on the accounts of the women who participated in this project, support provided by community-based organizations was pivotal in the lives of provincially sentenced women in Atlantic

Canada. Regardless of location, participants consistently reported that the vast majority of service provision for women in the provincial correctional system was carried out by community groups. For example, Daisy said:

“[I]n terms of services offered by the institution there was none. It was really relied upon by outside groups like the Elizabeth Fry Society [and] Coverdale Court Services.”

According to the women who were interviewed, the types of programming offered by community-based organizations on the inside included sexual health, anger management, addictions, effective communication, healthy relationships, and personal boundaries. In addition, outside groups coming into the jails provided women with informal counselling, faith-based support, recreational activities (e.g., bingo, movie night, crafts, making gifts to send to their children, etc.), literature to read, pet therapy, advocacy, human rights awareness, assistance in obtaining personal identification, help with temporary absences, information about supports in the community, as well as release planning. Some of the organizations, such as the Elizabeth Fry Society (EFry), also took orders from the women and bought personal toiletry products that were not available for purchase at the jail canteen. As Jennifer described:

“[EFry will] take an order form and go to the dollar store or drug store to buy you things that you need like conditioner or lotion or hair dyes or stuff that makes you feel a little bit better inside, stuff that you can’t get at the canteen store here.”

The women noted that the Elizabeth Fry Society, Coverdale, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and various religious organizations were the main community-based

service providers coming into the jails. On the inside, participants said they received key support from faith-based organizations (e.g., clergy, chaplains, ministers, reverends, nuns, etc.). The religious support was predominantly from Christian-based organizations. Despite the disproportionate number of Aboriginal women in provincial jails, none of the participants mentioned any Aboriginal healing or spiritual services.

The women highlighted religious church services within the correctional facilities as the most common type of support provided by faith groups. Nevertheless, like much of the correctional programming women talked about, church services were offered to varying degrees in the provincial correctional facilities I visited. Furthermore, the vast majority of church services in the provincial jails that housed both women and men were co-ed. Less frequently, the women who participated in this project said that services would be offered to women only. As well as onsite church services, participants reported that individuals from various religious affiliations provided additional support to women on the inside, such as arts and crafts programs, as well as faith-based counselling:

“I go to church with the women and I also, you can call the Reverend and he sees me personally. He’ll chat and counsel me.” (Jennifer)

“There’s one-on-one counselling with a nun that comes in to volunteer her time.” (Mary)

“There was Sister [Name]. She would come in everyday. She took a course in addictions counselling and she would go there every day to talk to the girls. There was also [Name of minister]. [Name] is a minister and she came in I believe once a week and did crafts and things with the girls or if they just wanted to chat, she would chat as well.” (Jess)

For some of the women, especially those incarcerated in remote areas of the region, the only support they received in the provincial system was from religious community members who volunteered their time. As Ellen stated:

“Other than... your Chaplains there was nothing available.”

In addition to religious services, another key support for women serving time in provincial jails was Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Once again this primary support for women in the provincial system was community-based. Similar with church services, AA was co-ed at the jails where it was offered. Participants contended that AA was the most common addiction support they received while incarcerated. However, as with all other programming on the inside, the frequency of AA differed at each of the provincial correctional facilities. For instance, AA was only consistently offered at one of the jails and that was on a weekly basis. At another provincial correctional centre, AA convened once every two weeks. However, women had to put their names on a list and then correctional staff would determine attendance for that week. Participants reported that only five spots were open to women, while twenty-five men were able to participate in the bi-weekly AA meetings. While women at that correctional facility wanted to benefit from AA, they found it extremely frustrating to be denied access to the meetings by staff. As Sug highlighted:

“I put a thing in to go to AA every Tuesday night after work, but I won’t get picked every time. They only pick certain people every week to go there... They’ll pick names of who goes where. So, everyone... there was a time when people wouldn’t even go to AA at all because their name never gets picked, and [other] people are always going, and it’s stupid.”

At another jail, AA was offered, but the women's participation had been withdrawn by correctional staff approximately one week before the interviews took place. Participants said frowned-upon interactions that occurred between women and men during the meetings had caused correctional staff to cease participation among the women:

“Also, we used to... it started with the girls and the guys, you know, they're in the same room and they start to talk and some of them were flirting or doing whatever and so they just cut the women out. So we are segregated. All the women were segregated to our unit.” (Sally)

Although the women were segregated in their unit and unable to participate in any of the programming that was running at the jail, AA was still being offered to the men. The fourth jail which was part of the research did not have any AA programming for women at the time of the study. Participants from that correctional facility expressed a strong need for AA support and wished the program had been available during their period of incarceration.

In addition to AA, Narcotics Anonymous (NA) was identified by participants as being an integral community-based support on the inside. However, across Atlantic Canada, NA was offered far less frequently than AA in the provincial setting. The women spoke intently about the need for more NA meetings in provincial jails. At the time of the study, the frequency of meetings varied from institution to institution. Women at one of the provincial correctional facilities had access to weekly NA meetings, while another jail offered monthly NA groups. In contrast, one of the correctional facilities did not offer NA at all. Furthermore, at the jail where the women had their attendance for AA revoked, they were also forced to withdrawal indefinitely from the NA meetings even though it was still being offered to the men. The infrequency of NA in provincial correctional facilities was

particularly problematic, because most women had substance-abuse issues and desperately wanted support for their addictions. Additionally, the women reported the need to have women-only NA gatherings, because they found it difficult to address the underlying issues of their addictions in the presence of men.

By far, the two most common organizations identified by participants that provided the bulk of services and programming at the provincial level, community-based or otherwise, were the Elizabeth Fry Society and Coverdale. The women said that these two community organizations frequently came into the jails and offered programming on shoplifting, anger management, effective communication, healthy relationships, and/or personal boundaries. EFry volunteers also came into the provincial jails and did recreational-type activities in the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Furthermore, both Coverdale and EFry provided women with various forms of individualized support, such as informal counselling and pre-release planning. Over and over again, the women contended that without programming, services, and support from EFry, and to a lesser extent Coverdale, they would not have received any support during their period of incarceration:

“EFry is here and basically that’s the only program we have now.” (Kelly)

“[I]f it wasn’t for EFry we would have nothing!”(Jessica)

“Yep, EFry, if it wasn’t for them we’d have nothing!”(Jenna)

While EFry and Coverdale were identified as being key service providers in provincial jails, the women longed for more programming options from these agencies. Participants reported that the amount of programming currently offered failed to address the breadth of issues faced by criminalized women. The women recognized, however, that community-

based organizations were limited in the amount of support they could provide women incarcerated in provincial correctional facilities. For example, Butterfly noted:

“I mean they [EFry] can only do so much for us.”

The fact that these organizations were non-profit and lacked stable funding meant that services were often reliant on the amount of resources available. Limited resources and staff capacity influenced the amount of programming organizations, such as EFry and Coverdale, were able to deliver. Consequently, participants said that services at the jails were frequently interrupted if there were changes in funding or if staff were unable to visit the jails. For example, programming was affected by staff vacations, insufficient number of volunteers, as well as demanding court cases where staff provided primary support for the accused. As Jennifer explained:

“[EFry] were involved in a pretty heavy court case the last three weeks... So they weren't here for quite awhile.”

The women relied heavily on the support EFry provided in the provincial jails and looked forward to their visits. Often times, EFry and Coverdale were the only consistent people women saw while incarcerated. Participants said that they often formed trusting relationships with individuals from community-based organizations, which was somewhat rare in the correctional setting. While the women understood the limitations placed on these organizations, they were disappointed when services were interrupted.

Despite the identified importance of these community-based organizations in the lives of criminalized women, neither the Elizabeth Fry Society nor Coverdale existed in the

provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador or Prince Edward Island.³ Subsequently, provincially sentenced women in those two provinces received fewer supports than women did in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Existing regional chapters of EFry attempted to offer support and visit women in both Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, but the geographic distance and lack of stable funding made it difficult for these organizations to provide meaningful, consistent support.

The findings from this study were important because they highlighted the significant contribution community-based organizations made in the lives of women incarcerated at the provincial level in the Atlantic Region. The study provided a detailed account of the services and supports community agencies offered incarcerated women at the provincial level. While Comack (2000) observed that many of the programs offered to provincially sentenced women in the province of Manitoba were provided by outside individuals, groups, and organization coming into the jails, none of the Atlantic studies specifically dealt with the role of community-based organizations within provincial correctional facilities.

Based on the personal accounts of participants, it was clear that the services and programming provided by community-based organizations were the foundation of support for women in the provincial correctional system in Atlantic Canada. For many of the women, the only support they received on the inside was from individuals in the community volunteering their services in the correctional facility. The support provided by community organizations was deeply valued and appreciated by the participants.

³ In actuality, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador had an Elizabeth Fry Society, but because of both the lack of government response to the needs of criminalized women and subsequent funding, it was mainly a paper organization that was not granted the financial support to provide programming or services to women.

The findings showed that just as correctional programming differed at each provincial jail, so too did services provided by community-based organizations. Supports were largely contingent on available resources, as well as dependent on whether or not women-centred community-based organizations, such as EFry and Coverdale, existed in communities surrounding each provincial jail in the region. Not only did community-based organizations provide pivotal programming, participants also reported that they performed the vast majority of pre-release support for provincially sentenced women and helped them set up supports in the community to ease their transition from jail to the community.

Release Planning and Support. One internal support that impacted women's incarceration experiences and was inextricably linked to their post-jail experiences was release planning. Although pre-release support is, in theory, a core program executed in all federal correctional facilities for women, a recent study with federally sentenced women has shown that limited opportunities exist for women to carry out their pre-release plan (Pollack, 2008). Similarly, participants in my study reported that little release planning existed at the provincial level. In fact, many of the women interviewed said they received no release support from provincial correctional staff:

“There’s nothing to prepare me to walk back out.”(Butterfly)

“[T]here’s nothing here that’s going to help me prepare to go back out into the community...” (Candy)

“In any of the county times I did in [Name of city] there was no help. There was no help. I’m sorry to say. I have to be honest with you. There was none. I had no one helping me with housing. I had no one helping me with assistance.”(Jess)

According to participants, very little was in place to help women prepare to walk back out of the provincial system and into the community. Most women had exited the system without formally speaking with anyone prior to their release.

Across the four Atlantic provinces, there was no universal policy in place that required correctional staff to engage in release planning with the women. Only one of the four jails had a designated staff member who assisted women with service coordination on the outside. As Mary reported:

“Oh, I’ve been to the classification officer and she’s been helping out fairly well ’cause she wants to see me do well and she wants to give me as much help.”

The women at that particular jail said the classification officer was a valuable resource in terms of helping them access some of the support they needed on the outside. However, while the women appreciated her assistance, they also stated that given the demands of her workload it was difficult to meet with the classification officer, have the necessary paperwork completed, and for things to be done in a timely manner. For example, April said:

“[S]ometimes [name of classification officer] will try to set some things up before you leave. She’s pretty good with that, but then I find it’s awfully hard to get to see her too, [and] she moves slowly, very slowly!”

At two other jails, participants said that each woman was assigned a caseworker when she entered the provincial correctional facility. As part of their informal job description, caseworkers (who were also the women’s correctional guards) were supposed to assist women in setting up supports and services in the community prior to their release date. Participants contended that the amount of pre-release support women received depended

solely on the individual caseworker. Many of women said, however, that caseworkers rarely carried out any type of release planning with them. As Hailey noted:

“[Y]ou’re appointed a caseworker, which is a guard, and depending on the kind of caseworker you get, if they come in and help you every day when they’re on or if they just talk to you when you want, which is not good, because they should be able to tell you... ‘Okay, what do you want when you get released?’ ...That is the way a caseworker here is supposed to be, but some caseworkers don’t do that.”

In addition to the reported discrepancies in support provided by caseworkers, the majority of women who participated in this project had no idea who their assigned caseworkers were. Participants said that they had never been introduced to their caseworker or made aware of the support they could provide. Most women who participated in focus-group interviews only found out about the role of the caseworker from a fellow participant:

Michelle: They have counsellors [caseworkers] here?

Lauren: Yes!

Sam: Yes, you have a caseworker.

Michelle: I didn’t know that!

Jenna: A caseworker. That is what I am saying... I didn’t know neither!

Sam: If you want something you are supposed to have a guard assigned to you so you can specifically go to that guard to help you out.

Jenna: Now what I am saying with the caseworker, I think it should be mandatory that 3 weeks to a month before...

Sam: Sit down with them...

Lauren: Yeah!

Jenna: “Okay, so say what is your case plan here? What’s going to happen with you and what do you have set up? Why don’t we set this up?” But, they don’t do that. Well, what’s the sense of me having a caseworker then? “Why do you call yourself my caseworker if you’re not doing nothing for me...?”

Given the lack of formal release-support provided by the provincial correctional system itself, the women contended that the limited amount of preparation they had received was mostly given by outside organizations. Participants said that individuals from religious affiliations, community addictions-treatment facilities, Coverdale, and Elizabeth Fry Society assisted women the best they could in coordinating services and support to ease women’s transition to the community. For instance, when I asked Daisy if she had ever received help on the inside with release-planning, she said:

“I did. Again that was only through outside organizations. My release-planning was done by Coverdale and the Elizabeth Fry Society. They assisted with my parole papers, release-planning; made sure that everything went smooth in the transition, and my therapy outside.”

Participants stated that, in varying capacities, individuals from community-based groups helped women plan for their release by assisting them in obtaining personal identification, setting up social assistance, securing a place to live, getting accepted to residential treatment facilities, finding employment, accessing programming, and making various appointments (e.g., probation, social workers, methadone maintenance clinic, etc.). However, most of the women said they specifically had to ask for pre-release support, otherwise it would not have been offered to them. For example, Kelly said:

“Like, if you go to them [Coverdale] and ask them for help, yeah they’ll definitely do what they can to help you get out of here.”

By and large, however, the majority of women who participated in this project contended that release planning of any kind was scarce at the provincial level. Most reported that they had been left on their own to set up services and programming prior to their release:

“Anything you want to do, you got to do it for yourself!”(Kelly)

“[I]t’s up to you to kind of search for what you need and where you need to go.”

(Ellen)

“[I]f you don’t do it yourself then nobody else will do it for ya! That’s just the way they look at it and that’s it.”(Mother Goose)

Participants found the task of linking with community services overwhelming. Phone restrictions placed on the women made it difficult to contact community-based supports while incarcerated. For example, often women only had access to the telephone after business hours. In addition, many women were jailed in facilities outside of their home communities and could not afford to make long distance calls to service providers in areas to which they would be returning. Moreover, a large proportion reported that they did not have a good understanding of the services, programming, and support available in the community. As Girly explained:

“I wish there was somebody out there, like, I don’t know who to talk to out there.

I don’t know who to go to or anything. So, I hope someone points me in the [right] direction.”

Similarly, in her study with a group of women in an Ontario provincial jail, Vir Tyagi (2004) found that many women lacked awareness of the types of services available in the community or where they could go for help once they were released. Many women longed for guidance in preparing for their release. For many of the women who participated in this study, release-planning was at the top of the list of programming that they wanted implemented in provincial jails, which is similar to previous reports from provincially sentenced women in Nova Scotia (SCPIW, 1992). In fact, many studies have identified the need for meaningful, gender-specific release programs to assist women as they exit the correctional system (Maidment, 2006a; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; Pollack, 2008; Richie, Freudenberg, & Page, 2001; SCPIW, 1992).

CHAPTER FIVE: REINTEGRATION EXPERIENCES

One of the main objectives of my study was to gain a greater understanding of the reintegration experiences of women who have been incarcerated in the provincial correctional system in Atlantic Canada. During the interviews, participants spoke at length about the release-process, as well as their initial transition experience as they exited jail and entered the community. The women also painted a vivid portrait of what it was like to reintegrate back into society, including the challenges they faced and factors they believed facilitated a more positive reintegration experience. Based on the women's personal accounts, it was evident that the jail environment and lack of support at the provincial level, as described in the previous chapter, significantly impacted their post-jail lives.

The Release-Process

None of the literature on provincially sentenced women in Canada has detailed women's experience of the formal release-process, nor the impact the initial release had on their reintegration. I was particularly interested in learning about the procedures leading up to a woman's release and the emotions that surrounded the event. Participants described the initial release-process as impersonal in nature and argued that correctional personnel were insensitive to their needs as they exited the correctional system. Women experienced a variety of conflicting emotions as they prepared to leave, as well as when they exited the correctional facilities and entered the community. Consequently, I categorized the findings into the following two themes: (1) opening the doors and (2) mixed-emotions.

Opening the Doors. I was unable to locate any correctional policy documents detailing release practices. Based on reports by participants, there appeared to be no official release-procedures at the provincial level. The women interviewed described the events leading up

to their release as being very mechanical and impersonal in nature. Women were simply instructed by a correctional officer to collect their belongings, had their personal items searched, and were then escorted by an officer to the front entrance. As participants noted:

“As far as the actual release, I think it was just basically here’s your clothes, here’s your stuff, [and] here you go!... it was pretty cut and dry.” (Ellen)

“[W]ell, you pack your cell up and then you go out front to where you came in and they go through your stuff that you’re bringing out to make sure you don’t have any contraband. You take your clothes and personals and [they] open the door.”(Summer)

*“Basically they [the women] were just walked to the door and that was it!”
(Mother Goose)*

“... [The release-process was, like,] here’s the doors, open them up, and see you later!”(Jodi)

According to participants, the provincial system gave little thought about the impact the release-process had on women’s reintegration experiences. Despite release being an emotionally-charged event, women received very little emotional support from staff as they went through this important transition. Participants commented on the fact that the correctional officers were fairly withdrawn during the release-process and did not offer much encouragement. Furthermore, the women felt that the significance of the event was undermined by correctional staff. For example, the guards frequently made snide remarks to the women as they left the correctional facilities. As two of the women described:

“They [correctional staff] let you go and say ‘good luck’ pretty much!”(Kelly)

“It was just like, ‘I hope we don’t see you back here again!’” (Ellen)

Participants stated that such remarks were belittling and made them feel as though they were being set up for “failure” before they even made it outside of the correctional facility.

Participants also felt the correctional system impinged on the “success” of their transition by failing to adequately inform women about their release dates. It was not uncommon for women to be told the night before or on the morning of their discharge that they would be leaving. Without advanced notification, it was difficult for women to prepare for their release. At the very basic level, it was customary for women not to know how they were physically going to get from the correctional facility to their residing community. For example, Marsha said:

“Well, number one [thing I needed help with] was a drive... I managed to get someone to pick me up. I mean I had no way or I would have had to walk like probably five or six miles.”

Similarly, O’Brien and Lee (2006) identified transportation as a basic need among criminalized women exiting the correctional system. Most women who participated in this study struggled to coordinate transportation, because they were given very little time to make arrangements. Transportation options were fairly limited in the Atlantic Region and the location of the correctional facilities outside of the “city centres” further narrowed women’s choices. In addition, their position of economic marginalization meant that many women could not afford the cost of transportation given that they were often incarcerated in remote areas far from their communities. Furthermore, family members often did not have the economic means to pick up the women when they were released. Participants found it difficult to leave the correctional system without having a friend or family member waiting

on the outside. The women said that exiting the correctional system without the support of a loved one led to a very isolating release experience.

In some instances, the provincial correctional system supplied women with bus fare on the day of their release if they did not have pre-arranged transportation. As participants noted:

“Oh yeah, you do have to arrange a ride. Most times you don’t get a ride. They [correctional staff] just give you a bus ticket.” (Hailey)

“They pretty much gave you a bus ticket and you were on your way.” (Vicky)

While it was not their first choice, the majority of women I spoke with had to resort to taking public transportation. Taking the bus was described by participants as being an unpleasant and impersonal experience. The women called for a more private means of transportation as they exited the correctional system and returned to their communities.

There is very little literature describing the events leading up to a woman’s release. The findings from this study showed that the release-process was very mechanical and impersonal in nature at the provincial level. Little notice was given to the women about their release dates, which made it difficult for women to prepare for their return to the community. The belittling and humiliation women experienced as they exited the system made their return to the community more daunting. The “opening of the doors” was symbolic of the women’s release. Once they got through those front gates they were no longer confined; the women were “free.” However, the transition process only started when they left the correctional facility. The women were now faced with multiple challenges as they attempted to reintegrate back into society after being incarcerated in a very punitive

and controlling environment. The women experienced a plethora of emotions as they navigated their transition from the correctional system to the community.

Mixed Emotions. Transitioning from the inside out can be a very difficult and anxious time for anyone (Maidment, 2006a; O'Brien, 2001a, 2001b). In speaking with participants, it was evident that the emotional distress they experienced during their period of incarceration, including the events leading up to their release, significantly impacted their post-jail lives. Some of the most prominent words used by women to describe their feelings about leaving jail were joy and/or excitement:

“I was happy and excited to be out [of jail]!”(Sug)

“Oh, I can’t wait to get out of here! Oh, man! I’m excited! I just want to get out of here.”(Girly)

*“I just couldn’t wait to get out [of jail] ‘cause I hated the county [jail] so much.”
(Marsha)*

*“I’m just going to be so happy to go out and go home. Just so happy to leave!”
(Sally)*

Despite their apparent happiness about their impending release, participants were overcome with fear as they exited the provincial correctional system. The women repeatedly used the word “scared” to express how they felt as they transitioned from jail to the community. As participants poignantly stated:

“The only thing is I’m really scared!”(Marge Simpson)

“Scared, I was so scared! (Ann)

“Going back out? Oh, scared! Actually petrified is the right word!” (Jody)

“When I got released last time it was really scary!”(Jenna)

Some women explicitly stated the contradiction in emotions they experienced as they navigated their journey from inside jail walls to the community. For example, two of the participants explained:

“You want to go out, but I’m scared at the same time.” (Hailey)

“I was happy and excited to be out, but a little bit scared at the same time.”(Sug)

Similar to the current findings, existing literature has identified the release and reintegration process as being a tumultuous time in a woman’s life that led to contradictory emotions. However, while Evans (2006) talked about feelings of both joy and sorrow among women exiting the correctional system, the women in my study reported conflicting emotions of fear and happiness.

In addition to being afraid about what the outside held for them, many participants used the word “anxious” to characterize their feelings about returning to the community. Life in the community was unpredictable and many participants were unsure about what would happen to them upon release. The uncertainty surrounding participants’ futures contributed to apprehension:

“The days’ leading up is anxious, you’re anxious, you’re watching the time and you’re nervous. Everything is going through you, 'cause you don’t know what to expect when you walk out the door.”(Jody)

“I was scared... nervous... anxious. You know, fear of what to expect.” (Sally)

Many of the women were hesitant about returning to the community, because they had not received the necessary support on the inside that they believed would lead to a different lifestyle upon release. As participants explained:

“It was really scary [to leave]... because there is absolutely no kind of programming coming in here for us.”(Jenna)

*“Scary, because I hadn't gotten really any help regarding my addiction inside.”
(Sunshine)*

“I know before I'd be nervous leaving, scared, a lot of anxiety [around] just how to cope with stupid things, like everyday living. Getting a job, a place to stay, just little things like that.” (Charlene)

“I was a bit apprehensive about what I was going to do when I [got out of jail]... [I] was coming back to the same situations I left, so things weren't going to be any better that I could see.” (Jodi)

Feeling scared, frightened, and anxious was often a direct result of the fact that nothing had changed for the women during their period of incarceration. Consequently, they were faced with the same daily challenges they had prior to their imprisonment, which made their return to the community a daunting task. Not surprisingly then, women were often overwhelmed by the transition process.

Factors that Impacted Women's Reintegration Experiences

Many of the discussions I had with the women focused on the factors that influenced their reintegration experiences. The personal accounts of the women who participated in this study demonstrated that it was not an easy to transition from the inside out. Across the region, women shared similar stories of numerous barriers they experienced as they settled back into the community. I categorized the information participants provided about their reintegration experiences into the following nine themes: (1) housing, (2) financial resources, (3) education and employment, (4) fighting addictions, (5) community-based

support, (6) adjusting to life on the outside, (7) family and peer relationships, (8) stigma and shame, and (9) personal capacities. Furthermore, I contextualized the findings within the larger socio-political context in order to gain a greater appreciation of the systemic forces that influenced women's reintegration experiences.

Inadequate Housing Options. There is no question that safe and affordable housing is one of the most pressing needs for women upon re-entry. Numerous studies have identified housing as one of the top priorities for women as they exit jail/prison (Eaton, 1993; Evans, 2006; Maidment, 2006a; O'Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; O'Brien & Lee, 2006; Richie, 2001; Shaw, 1994a; Smith & Parriag, 2005; Vir Tyagi, 2004). Obtaining such basic needs as housing has become increasingly difficult for women given the eradication of essential support services by the government under the neo-liberal platform. Atlantic Canada has suffered greatly from government cutbacks on social spending (Beaton, 2004). Consequently, securing safe and affordable housing was a fundamental concern among the women who participated in this project. As Sunshine explained:

"... even just to come out [of jail] and go to a safe place is hard."

Furthermore, the stigma attached to histories of criminalization made it increasingly difficult for women to obtain housing when they returned to the community. For example, Ellen said:

"I've had a hard time in the community finding a place to live, because of my name or, because I've been in trouble or been a known drug dealer. So I've had a hard time there trying to find a place to live."

For a lot of women exiting provincial jails, failure to secure and maintain affordable housing was an extension of their economic marginalization (Maidment, 2006a). Many did

not have adequate housing before entering the correctional system. Their period of imprisonment only exacerbated the economic hardship they encountered, making it increasingly difficult for them to find housing once they were released. Criminalized women often experienced repeated periods of homelessness before and after imprisonment (Eaton, 1993; Maidment, 2006a; Richie, 2001). Several of the women I spoke with had been homeless at one point in their life. The following quote by Marge Simpson vividly illustrated the realities of many women who become entangled in the criminal (in)justice system:

“I know what living on the streets all about! I know what going to bed hungry is all about! I slept underneath bridges. I slept in cardboard boxes. I slept in crack shacks and just about anywheres (crying).”

Despite the fact that women had often experienced homelessness before entering jail/prison, it was not unusual for them to report that they had not received any assistance by corrections in arranging accommodations prior to their release (Eaton, 1993; Evans, 2006). Previous research has shown that without help securing housing while still on the inside, criminalized women often found themselves in situations where they had absolutely nowhere to go upon re-entry (O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O’Brien & Harm, 2002; O’Brien & Lee, 2006; Richie, 2001; Smith & Parriag, 2005; Vir Tyagi, 2004). Likewise, many women in my study were released into the community without support and had nowhere to go once they exited the provincial correctional system. As participants noted:

“I’m going to get out and I don’t know where I’m going to go yet.”(Summer)
“I knew people that were serving just less than two years at that time and they were getting ready to leave... Nothing was set up for those people whatsoever,

like you know, they were just basically thrown here to do the time, and most of them didn't have a clue where they were going to live when they got out."

(Mother Goose)

Devoid of secured accommodations, women are often forced into unstable and unsafe living arrangements or worse when they returned to the community (O'Brien & Harm, 2002). Many of the women who participated in this study were dependent on family and friends to provide temporary housing once they were released, because a better alternative was not available. Participants found themselves having to endure uncomfortable housing situations out of necessity, such as Jodi's experience of having to stay with an ex-partner when she left the correctional facility:

"I went and stayed with the father of my children for just a short period of time until I could get my own place and get things situated again. It was difficult, because we weren't together and he had a girlfriend and it was just really hectic, but I didn't stay there very long luckily."

Many of the women had no choice but to stay with friends and family who were entangled in addictions or crime, and who posed a threat to the women's personal safety and well-being. As Kelly said:

"I had nowhere to stay, so I fell back into staying with friends that were using. So, I had no choice."

Not only was their exposure to drugs disconcerting, but Maidment (2006a) also found that women frequently returned to former abusive relationships, because they lacked an alternative. It was not uncommon for the women who participated in this study to report

that they had returned to an unhealthy relationship at some point in their criminalization history.

The women reported that they were often forced into temporary, unstable, and unsafe accommodations because of a shortage of supported living environments and halfway houses in Atlantic communities. In comparison to other regions in the country, very few halfway houses for women exist in Atlantic Canada (Maidment, 2006c; Pollack, No Date). In many instances, women said that if they wanted to go to a halfway house upon release, they had to move to a new community, because there simply was no halfway house in their community of origin. As participants noted:

“There’s nothing really down there and that’s a big thing... is for women, especially halfway houses.”(Lauren)

“I’m from [name of town], but they don’t have a house there. So I have to go there [halfway house in different city]. I have gone there before, and I’ve slipped, and I’ve messed up, because the whole house everybody’s doing drugs. But that’s where I’ll have to go to, you know, because there’s nothing in [name of town]. Either that or put me on the street. There’s not much here.”(Candy)

At the time of the study, there was only one women-only halfway house in the region (located in Halifax, Nova Scotia). All the other halfway houses were for men or accommodated both women and men within the same facility. Women exiting the provincial system found it challenging to get into these halfway houses, because beds were predominantly reserved for women coming out of the federal correctional system. Furthermore, mixed-gendered housing was considered to be unsafe by the women, because they were at risk of being exposed to violence and/or abusive situations at the hands of

male residents. The halfway houses were also frequently located in economically disadvantaged, drug-infested neighbourhoods, which created unsafe living environments for women (“Women Unsafe,” 2004). Participants reported that their sobriety was compromised in an environment that was overrun with drugs:

“I went to the halfway house... Granted, you know what, there was more drugs floating through there then I think there was on the street.” (Babycakes)

“All you have to do is stick your hand out the window [to get drugs].” (Lauren)

The ease at which drugs were obtained made it extremely difficult for women to stay clean after a period of sobriety on the inside. As two of the women noted:

“For the last time I went [to the halfway house], for me, I did end up staying clean, but I’ll tell you it was hard.”(Candy)

*“I had to fight tooth and nail everyday to get through it [staying clean].”
(Babycakes)*

Given that halfway houses were typically male-dominated, infested with drugs, and located in unsafe neighbourhoods, most of the women interviewed did not see halfway houses as a viable option upon release, even when they were available.

These findings support previous research that has found a lack of suitable housing options for criminalized women exiting correctional facilities (Eaton, 1993; Evans, 2006; Maidment, 2006a; O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O’Brien & Harm, 2002; O’Brien & Lee, 2006; Richie, 2001; Shaw, 1994a; Smith & Parriag, 2005; Vir Tyagi, 2004). Obtaining safe and affordable housing was among one of the top priorities of women exiting the provincial correctional system. Similar to previous studies, the women reported that securing adequate shelter significantly contributed to their (in)ability to “successfully” reintegrate into the

community (O'Brien, 2001b; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; O'Brien & Lee, 2006; Richie, 2001; Smith & Parriag, 2005; Vir Tyagi, 2004). Not having someplace to go upon release was detrimental and was often the determining factor in whether or not women would return to jail in the future (O'Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; Shaw, 1994a). However, as the findings indicated, locating safe and affordable housing was a challenge for many participants. Subsequently, some women had no choice, but to return to jail, especially since they struggled with extreme levels of economic hardship.

Financial Resources. The feminization of poverty is increasing on a global scale (Moghadam, 2005). Economic policies and decreased state-provided welfare incomes contribute to women's poverty. Not surprising, one of the most fundamental and debilitating challenges that the women in my study faced upon release was financial insecurity. For the vast majority of participants, returning to the community meant a life of poverty. Many of the women spoke about the fact that they literally had "no" money when they exited the provincial correctional system. The fear of having to live in poverty was one of the foremost stressors in women's post-jail lives. As Jess revealed:

"I think every one of us has the fear of financial insecurity..."

Without money, women worried about how they were going to survive on the outside. Many had to figure out how they were going to get the economic resources to afford such basic necessities as shelter, clothing, food, and other expenses related to their daily survival (e.g., heat, hydro, etc.). For example, participants stated:

"I guess the biggest thing [challenge] was... the money factor and how I was going to cover everything; pay bills."(Ellen)

“You have to figure out what you’re going to do for money [when you get out of jail].”(Charlene)

Given that women often did not have the means to support themselves financially, many relied on social assistance as their primary income source. In fact, twenty-five women out of the thirty that reported their source of income received some form of social assistance prior to their incarceration (e.g., full welfare amounts, subsidized assistance to compliment employment incomes, or disability assistance). Upon release, women found themselves in similar positions of economic deprivation and had to rely once again on social assistance.

As Mary noted:

“I’m gonna be back on social assistance.”(Mary)

Having to depend on social support was closely linked with women’s position of economic marginalization. Drastic cuts to welfare under the neo-liberal regime in recent years have left its recipients living on incomes well below the poverty line (Chunn & Gavigan, 2006). At the time of the study, welfare amounts in the four Atlantic provinces were less than half that of the poverty line (National Council of Welfare, 2006). For example, social assistance incomes ranged anywhere from \$8,198 in Newfoundland and Labrador to \$3,427 in New Brunswick (National Council of Welfare, 2006). This meant, for example, that women who received welfare in the province of New Brunswick were forced to “survive” on \$285 a month. Participants said the money they received from social services was not sufficient enough to cover the costs associated with daily living. As April explained:

“Everything that my [welfare] cheque was before [going to jail] was paying rent and light bills. That was it and they want to know why I don’t stay away [from jail]! I can’t do it!”

Given the low welfare incomes individuals on social assistance received in the region, it was not surprising that more and more women lived in poverty (see Appendix 16). In fact, one in five women in Atlantic Canada now live below the poverty line (GPI Atlantic, 2001).

Women’s economic marginalization was exacerbated while they were imprisoned. It was apparent through the participants’ stories that most women came into the provincial correctional system with very little and left with even less:

“When I walk through these doors and I got nothing.” (Marge Simpson)

“It’s too hard to start over, especially for single women. They’ve lost everything once they went in there [jail]. They have no place to live. Then you’ve got to sit down and wait for social services to put you up...” (April)

In fact, it was common for the women to say that they were worse off leaving than when they came into jail, because they had lost everything in the process. There was no paid work for women in the provincial system and no income support (e.g., daily allowances) was provided by corrections once women were under provincial custody. In addition, welfare payments were stopped once women entered the correctional system. Furthermore, on the inside, women could not schedule appointments with social services or begin the application process to go back on social assistance before they were released from jail. As participants commented:

“I have to go to social services, but you can’t see them until you get out. You can’t make an appoint to see them or anything like that [before you leave].”

(Lauren)

“Social services do not come to this institution. So, let’s say you’ve been here for 12 months and you are just getting out, too bad! They’ll meet with you a week after you get out! So that’s kind of horrible.”(Ella)

Women reported that, because they had to wait until they were in the community before they could meet with social services, they had to wait upwards to several weeks to receive their first social assistance cheque.

For those women who had to rely on social assistance, their situation was further complicated by the fact that they needed a permanent address before they could be eligible for support. As documented in the previous section, women found it difficult to secure safe, affordable housing once they exited the provincial correctional system. Many of the women were faced with the immediate challenge of finding housing before they could collect social assistance, but could not get housing unless they had money. Hailey highlighted this conundrum by stating:

“Everybody wants to live in a home and have a good life, whatever, but what can you get on welfare? ...I just can’t understand how I’m going to do this ’cause you need an address to get on welfare, [and] you need welfare to have an address. So, it’s really hard...”

As a result, women frequently left the correctional facilities without any financial resources and no immediate means of being able to receive social assistance.

Not surprisingly, poverty significantly impacted the women's lives prior to their arrest, during incarceration, and even more so as they returned to the community. Women found it difficult to survive on extremely low levels of social assistance. Given that levels of poverty were exacerbated once women were imprisoned at the provincial level, it was increasingly challenging for women to "break free" from the vicious cycle of repeated criminalization once they exited the system. As April said in her interview:

"I'll admit, I do have two more charges to go up on, but that was in the early stages of me coming home. I was stuck in a house; I couldn't pay the rent or the bills. I was stuck with no food half the time and I snapped and just went out and done what I did. Back here we go again..."

Fellow participants said:

"[W]hen you get out and you've got no money, you've got no work; you very quickly go back to your instinct ways."(Ellen)

"I had no money every time I came out...when I came out I turned right back to the streets and my old ways so I could get money right away. I was walking down the street and I seen an old John that was driving by so... it's not like I had a chance to even get anything to eat that day." (Layla)

"Because we get out of here to nothing, so we get out and we have no roof over our heads, no food to put in our stomach, no money, what are we gonna do? You can't go hungry, you can't live on the streets so what are you gonna do? The only thing you know."(Butterfly)

"You always end up going back in all the time even though you don't want to. The cycle keeps going and gets bigger and bigger and bigger..." (Charlene)

Without money, the women had no hope for a better future and often had to revert to their “old ways” in order to survive.

The findings from my study support existing literature that highlights the need for criminalized women to secure adequate financial resources upon re-entry in order to be self-sufficient (Eaton, 1993; O’Brien & Lee, 2006; Smith & Parriag, 2005). However, these studies have failed to adequately acknowledge the impact of larger systemic forces, such as the feminization of poverty that inhibits women’s ability to be economically secure. Most of the women who participated in this study had to rely on social assistance as their main source of income both prior to and after imprisonment. The amount of financial support women in Atlantic Canada received on welfare was not sufficient enough for them to survive in the community, as it forced many to live below the poverty line. As in other parts of the country, which have seen more and more women criminalized for their economic marginalization (Chunn & Gavigan, 2006), the women in this study had little economic resources upon entering the provincial correctional system and found it increasingly difficult to improve their situation once they have been imprisoned.

Education and Employment. Another major challenge for the women who participated in this study was the lack of viable educational and employment opportunities in Atlantic communities. The reintegration literature has demonstrated the importance of employment as women navigate their transition from the correctional system to the community (Eaton, 1993, 2006; Evans, 2006; Leverentz, 2006; Maidment, 2006a; O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O’Brien & Harm, 2002; O’Brien & Lee, 2006; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Richie, 2001; Smith & Parriag, 2005). However, participants from around the region reported great

difficulty in obtaining well-paid, full-time, secure employment once they returned to the community.

Only seven participants were employed at the time of the study and three of those women had their incomes subsidized with social assistance. Most had been unemployed both before and after their period of incarceration. Women faced obstacles in gaining meaningful and sufficient employment, given that policy initiatives under the current neo-liberal ideology have resulted in the creation of a precarious low-wage (gendered and racialized) job market (Pollack, 2007a). The Atlantic Region has been plagued with high unemployment under the neo-liberal regimen. Unemployment rates are consistently higher in Atlantic Canada than in any other region in the country. In 2001, the national unemployment rate for women was 6.8%. It was more than double that in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (13.9%; Cameron, 2003). While slightly lower in Prince Edward Island (11%), New Brunswick (9.3%), and Nova Scotia (8.9%), unemployment rates among women were still considerably higher in those provinces than the rest of the country. Unstable job markets, gendered low paying jobs, and seasonal employment in Atlantic Canada contributed to the large number of unemployed women in the region, regardless of their criminalization histories or their educational attainment.

Previous studies have shown that criminalized women are typically poorly educated, which affects their ability to secure adequate employment (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Micucci et al., 1997; Shaw, 1994a; Vir Tyagi, 2004). In contrast to popular findings, most of the women in my study had higher levels of educational attainment. In fact, 20 of the 32 women I interviewed had completed high school, its equivalency, or higher. Yet, despite having at least a high school diploma, participants still had tremendous difficulty finding

employment throughout the Atlantic Region. Few women said they possessed the skills or training necessary to obtain stable employment. Participants spoke of the need (and desire) to advance their education further in order to increase their chances for employment, but as the women reported, the provincial correctional system only offered a grade twelve equivalency program. Similar to previous calls for improved vocational and educational opportunities in the correctional system (Eaton, 1993; O'Brien & Lee, 2006; Pollack, 2008), the women in this study also wanted greater access to educational and skill development programs while incarcerated.

Acquiring a higher level of education upon release repeatedly came up during the interviews as an important element for positive reintegration experiences. Some women were able to set up educational programs before their release, which gave them something to look forward to and encouraged them to think positively towards the future. As participants reported:

“I got more to look forward to whereas before I didn’t. I had no schooling.”(April)

“When I get out I’m going to be going to school. It’s a goal that I’ve been wanting actually for a long time.”(Mary)

The demands of obtaining an education allowed the women to escape from their current mindset and gave them the tools to make positive changes in their lives. As Girly exclaimed:

“I’m gonna be staying in school when I get out so that’s going to keep my mind occupied...”

Even for those women I interviewed who were not currently enrolled in some type of educational program, many reported that they wanted to return to school and get a better education. For example, two of the women said:

“I wanna go back to school definitely. I really do!”(Summer)

“I’m going to go back to school.”(Layla)

Vir Tyagi (2004) found that a large proportion of women incarcerated in an Ontario provincial jail wanted to attend school once they were back in the community.

Gaining more knowledge and practical skills was important to the women in this study.

Participants argued that education was the vehicle by which they could obtain a better life free from the adversities that plagued their past, as it provided them with a greater likelihood of obtaining secure, sustainable employment.

Obtaining employment was one of the primary concerns among the women interviewed. Participants valued the importance of gaining employment sufficient to obtain those elements necessary for survival (e.g., money to secure housing, food, clothing, and to support their children). As the literature suggests (Evans, 2006; O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b; Vir Tyagi, 2004), the majority of women in my study desperately wanted to be employed and financially independent upon being released. For example, participants stated:

“I would honestly like to go back to work...” (Jenna)

“I would like to seek part time employment ’cause I’ve worked in a lot of office jobs before this happened... so I could stand to have a little part time job.”(Sally)

“I want to be working!”(April)

As Eaton (1993) argued, employment not only provides women with income, but also makes them feel useful and valued by others in the community. However, little access to

meaningful work opportunities or training programs exists for incarcerated women (Pate & Kilroy, 2005; Pollack, 2008), which made it even more difficult for the women who participated in this study to secure employment when they returned to the community.

The literature has long pointed out that in addition to inadequate educational and employment programming, women also experienced employment barriers as a result of the stigma associated with their criminalization histories and criminal records (Evans, 2006; Leverentz, 2006; Maidment, 2006a, 2005a; O'Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Richie, 2001). Participants found it difficult to obtain employment after their release, because of their criminalization histories. As Lauren said, being known "*criminals*," made it challenging to get a job. Many employers were aware of women's criminalization histories given that they were often publicized in local media. As well, gossip travelled rampantly in small Atlantic communities, which made it difficult for the women to conceal their pasts. The women argued that both media and gossip further limited their job opportunities.

Maidment (2006a) argued that criminal records narrowed women's chance of employment upon release. Similarly, having a criminal record was identified by participants as a major obstacle in securing work after being incarcerated:

"[One] challenge obviously was employment; got a record!"(Daisy)

"It's really hard [to get a job] when you have a criminal record." (Kelly)

"Also, as far as finding and keeping work, reason being any place that requires a criminal record check it chases you, your record chases you for quite some time, because not many people with a criminal record would hire you..."(Jess)

Coming out of jail the women were faced with the dilemma of either identifying their criminal record to potential employers or not disclosing it on their applications. As Jodi said:

“I guess it’s kind of like if you’re applying for a job, you don’t know really whether to put that you have a criminal record or not.”

The women were aware that high rates of unemployment across Atlantic Canada meant that employers had access to a large pool of applicants and revealing their criminal records almost ensured that they would not be considered for the job. Women often did not divulge their past to possible employers for fear of being overlooked for the position. Some women said they were able to obtain employment by not disclosing their criminalization histories. However, they often lost their jobs shortly thereafter, because employers did a criminal-records check once they were hired. For example, Jess explained:

“I was let go because they did a [criminal-record] check. So, it was over! So that’s been a problem.”

Participants said they faced further discrimination based on the type of charges they received. According to the women who were indicted on theft or fraud charges, they found it exceptionally difficult to get a job after their period of incarceration. As two of the women noted:

“I’ve never had a real job in my life due to my charges.”(Marge Simpson)

“About jobs, because the nature of my crime when I went to prison... I robbed the store I worked for, I got out, and... there was nothing there to help me get a job. So, I had to go out on my own and apply for jobs, and every person turned me down because of what I did.” (Candy)

Difficulties in obtaining employment due to a history of theft and fraud is particularly problematic for provincially sentenced women, given that they are the two most common crimes committed by women who receive a sentence of less than two years.

Not being able to find employment was a major stressor in the women's lives and took an emotional toll on the women who were interviewed. As Butterfly expressed:

“The last time when I got released from here that was a big thing with me. I got out and I was beating the streets looking for work. Like, to the point that I phoned my mom up crying. ‘I didn’t get it! I didn’t get it!’ What do I have to do?”

Many women reported that they could not handle the repeated rejection that ensued when they looked for work. As Candy said:

“Every job I applied for... I was refused ... every time I was refused it beat me down a little bit more. I can’t handle the rejection.”

The stress associated with job searching was intolerable for many of the women who participated in this project and left them feeling desperate. As a result, many women found themselves turning back to alcohol and drugs to ease the pain of what they were feeling.

Fighting Addictions. The literature has identified addiction support as a primary need among women exiting the correctional system (Evans, 2006; Hartwell, 2001; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Pollack, 2008; Richie, 2001; Shaw, 1994a; Vir Tyagi, 2004).

Participants in my study argued that community-based addiction services and treatment were vital for women released from jail. Many of the women said that, when possible, they took advantage of existing addictions support (e.g., rehab, detox centres, long-term residential facilities, and day programs). However, there was a large gap in services across

the Atlantic Region. Participants reported that accessing addiction-support was one of the biggest challenges they faced as they navigated their journey from inside jail walls to the community. For example, when I asked Sally what she foresaw as a major hurdle upon release, she noted:

“Just being sober is going to be a challenge.”

From the first day out onward, participants struggled with their addiction. As two of the women professed:

“My addiction has been my major challenge.”(Sunshine)

“It’s really, really hard to stay away from it...” (Lauren)

Addiction afflicted participants’ lives prior to, during, and after incarceration. Twenty-nine of the 32 women who participated reported histories of alcohol and/or substance abuse. The number of women in this study addicted to prescription and intravenous drugs was high, but not unexpected given that intravenous drug use is high among individuals with economically disadvantaged backgrounds, low education-levels, unstable family structures, poor social support networks, and high rates of victimization (Patten, 2006).

In recent years, there has been a substantial increase in the number of injection-prescription drug users in Atlantic Canada (Drug Safety Institute, 2005; Patten, 2006). Addiction to OxyContin in the region has reached epidemic proportions and has garnered international attention. In addition to battling addictions to such drugs as crack, cocaine, and/or heroine, many participants reported an addiction to OxyContin and/or Dilaudid, which are typically injected intravenously. Some of the women said their addiction started after being prescribed these highly addictive painkillers from their physicians. For example,

Mother Goose's addiction to OxyContin, which her family doctor prescribed, occurred because of complications during childbirth. As she explained:

“You know I didn’t wake up one day and say, ‘Hey, I want to be a drug addict!’ It happened! The shitty thing about it is a doctor is actually responsible for my drug addiction... I had a little boy and due to complications from my delivery of my son I experienced a back problem, which caused me to go on pain relievers. Pain relievers a physician was prescribing to me! Never in a million years would you stop to think a physician, your own family doctor, is going to do anything to harm you! It was OxyContin... He never did tell me that this is an addictive drug. If they had of told me that from the beginning, this is the way your life is going to be, I never would have took the first pill. I would have lived with the pain. Knowing that this is where I was going to end up to eventually. So things went along with that addiction. I went to the doctor and eventually he stopped prescribing to me, because he got in trouble for giving me an addictive medication. As soon as I said I can’t live without this drug. I’m sick without it. He cut me off and left me with no resources... So, basically a physician started me out on a pain reliever and here I am ten years later serving a federal sentence and it had to do with the fact that I had trouble with my delivery from my son and I don’t even have my children today.”

Similarly, Jennifer told me:

“It [Dilaudid] was prescribed to me. I had had surgery and I had about three or four prescriptions of it at 2 mg, 80 at a time and I got hooked on them that way...”

Mother Goose and Jennifer were not alone in their experiences. The misuse of drug-prescribing practices by physicians has been attributed to rising prescription-addictions in the Atlantic provinces (Drug Safety Institute, 2005; Patten, 2006). In 2005, more than 92,500 prescriptions were filled for oxycodone-based painkillers, such as OxyContin, throughout Atlantic Canada in the first six months alone (Drug Safety Institute, 2005). An overwhelming 44% of those prescription transactions occurred in the province of New Brunswick.

Despite the known fact that a high proportion of women enter the correctional system with addictions issues, the system fails to provide adequate addiction support to women while they are incarcerated (Alleyne, 2006). As detailed by the women's personal accounts in the previous chapter, very few addictions programs existed at the provincial level. Sporadic, introductory addiction programs were not sufficient to deal with the magnitude of drug addictions these women experienced. In the absence of treatment services in provincial corrections, the jails have relied almost exclusively on such community-based organizations as Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous to provide the majority of addiction support to criminalized women. Subsequently, women exit jail without receiving adequate addiction treatment. As a result, women often attributed struggles with their post-release addictions, partly on the provincial system for failing to provide support. As participants noted:

"[T]here's no help and you regress..."(Layla)

"[O]ut there at jail they don't have anything. I can't understand!" (Sunshine)

Not only did the absence of addiction treatment programs cause women to lay partial blame on the system, but participants also reported that the situation was magnified,

because women were discharged without proper medical care for medications known to be addictive. Participants said that women in the provincial system were prescribed addictive pain medications, such as OxyContin, by correctional medical staff and then released without appropriate care. As Lauren noted:

“[T]hey just booted me out on OxyContin! They should have weaned me off them [before being released].”

Women were not supplied with any medication to carry them over until they found a physician in the community. Furthermore, participants said it was challenging to find a family doctor in the Atlantic Region; waiting lists of several months or even years were not uncommon:

“It took me 6 months to find a doctor. So I was 6 months buying pills on the street until I found a doctor. Yep! I don’t know how legal that was for them to release me like that without [being weaned off OxyContin]...” (Lauren)

The provincial correctional system neither provided referrals for medical care nor followed-up with the women upon release. Consequently, as in Lauren’s experience, many women began obtaining prescription drugs illegally once they were back on the street:

“I had a problem on my release last time. They put me on a narcotic... OxyContin and they released me into the community and I had no doctor. They knew I had no doctor... They released me with no doctor, no prescription, none to take with me or anything! So now here I am. They made me the drug addict, like, I never used pills or anything. So, they made me the opiate user and then booted me out on my arse. What do I do? So what happens? I became an addict and I started going through withdrawals and I

had to start buying them. I went to the hospital and they said “Nope, sorry.” They [corrections] even wrote me a letter saying that she was released and that she was on this medication. They gave me my whole healthcare package with all my information and the hospital still wouldn’t do anything.”

Participants also found themselves in other precarious situations immediately upon release that made sobriety hard to maintain. For example, it was common for local drug dealers to seek out women once they had returned to the community. As three of the participants highlighted:

“I mean as soon as you come out of jail, bang, they [drug dealers] are going to be there for you...” (Ann)

“You’re back right out to the wolves. As soon as you walk back out there you see old drug dealers and you say you’re clean, you just got out of jail... and he’s like, ‘Here’s a pill. Congratulations!’” (Sunshine)

“And in every apartment building lobby there is somebody at the stairs or going on the elevator asking if you want any dope!” (Michelle)

Living a life without alcohol and drugs was extremely difficult for participants once they were back in the community. They could no longer be connected to anything related to their former life of drugs if they wanted to stay clean. Participants said they had to disassociate from the people they knew, the places they went, and activities they normally participated in, because the majority of those things put them in danger of using again:

“I made it a point to not contact anyone that I knew from the old [group], because that would put me at risk for using or that sort of thing.” (Jess)

“I stay away from all associations that I had in regards to my drug use.” (Ellen)

“[Like] I said, it’s just staying away from certain people, certain places, certain things...” (Sally)

“You really have to remove yourself from the environment that you only knew, which would be your drug friends, in order to succeed, because if you go back after to that environment you're going to go right back to where you started.”(Sunshine)

While they recognized it was necessary to stay away from situations that put them at risk of drug-use and further criminalization, it was difficult for women to disconnect themselves from their old lives. Previous research has also pointed out the isolation that women experience as a result of having to sever connections with former acquaintances, families, partners, and their communities (Evans, 2006; Pollack, 2008). As you might expect, women found it challenging to overcome their addictions without supportive relationships. Additionally, women were further isolated in their experiences, because few addiction-treatment services exist in the region to support them through this difficult transition.

For the majority of women, one’s ability to “successfully” reintegrate back into society was dependent upon their ability to stay clean. However, getting help was crucial for their sobriety and the women said that there was a huge gap in addictions services. In the vast majority of Atlantic Canada that support simply did not exist. In general, there are very few community-based addictions services and treatment facilities available in the region, especially in rural areas and small town communities (Patten, 2006; Smith & Parriag, 2005). The lack of funding for addiction services has resulted in few options for women.

For example, limited state-funding has resulted in a small number of therapeutic community-based residential facilities (e.g., detoxification and drug rehabilitation) in the

region. Despite being an important element for positive reintegration experiences, there are simply not enough beds available to meet the needs of women exiting jail (Hayes, 2004; “Women Unsafe,” 2004). At the time of the study, only 24 community-based residential facilities exist in the region and just 15 of those provide support to women (see Appendix 17). Not surprisingly, the gender and cultural appropriateness of these services is questionable. Long-term addiction treatment services in the region have been criticized for failing to take into account the specific needs of women (Patten, 2006; Smith & Parriag, 2005). Only six of the residential facilities were designed specifically to treat women. Five were located in Nova Scotia alone. No women-only community-based residential treatment facilities existed in the provinces of New Brunswick or Newfoundland and Labrador. The nine remaining treatment programs were for men with only a limited numbers of beds made available to women. However, similar to the situation with halfway houses, first priority was given to women released from federal custody. Subsequently, high demand for the limited number of addiction treatment services in the Atlantic Region meant that women were left to deal with their addictions on their own until they could be placed into a program. Subsequently, participants called for more long-term women-centred addiction treatment support in Atlantic Canada.

In addition to the shortage of long-term community-based residential facilities, the absence of methadone maintenance programs in Atlantic communities further limited women’s ability to access the type of addiction support they needed. As previously mentioned, methadone was pivotal in helping participants overcome some of their addictions issues. However, the reality of the situation is that methadone treatment programs are not widely available in the region. In 2005, methadone programs were only

available in four cities in New Brunswick (Moncton, Miramichi, Fredericton, and Saint John), three cities in Nova Scotia (Dartmouth, Halifax, and Sydney), as an interim service in Newfoundland and Labrador, and as a pilot project in Prince Edward Island (Patten, 2006). Even in the larger communities where methadone was available, waiting-lists were extensive. Lengthy waiting-lists for a limited number of desired spaces in the region meant that few women received treatment for their addictions. For example, when Lauren telephoned a methadone treatment program to get help with her drug addiction, she was told:

“We don’t know if we can get you in for like a month or a month and a half.”

Furthermore, when talking about the plight of the methadone program in their home province, three of the women said:

“It’s [methadone] definitely been a second chance for me. I think it [methadone] needs to become available more here. I know now they’re taking one new person a month in regards to methadone treatment. I know the waiting list is about a year, year and a half long unless you are HIV positive or pregnant. You’re waiting at least a year if you put your name to that [list].”(Ellen)

“Look at the methadone clinic. There was just an article in the paper. There are 170 people on the waiting list waiting for treatment, but there’s no physical way to do it. There’s not enough manpower and there is not enough money obviously...”
(Sunshine)

“I got on methadone too! I waited two years to get on that so. The list stops... it sucks! It stopped again. They’re only taking two people a month: a guy and a girl!”(Layla)

With waiting-lists of up to two years, Candy advised the importance of the need for women to secure a spot in a methadone program as soon as possible, by stating:

“Put your name on a list, because it’s gonna take years before you get on it [methadone].”

While advancements have been made recently in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to increase access to methadone, the Atlantic Region lacks sufficient methadone-treatment programs to meet the demands of the population (Patten, 2006).

The lack of addiction support both inside jail and in the community evoked a sense of hopelessness among women. Many of the women who participated in this study had not been able to get the support they needed and fell back into their addictions once they were released. As Sam said about the last time she had gotten out of jail:

“[It was the] first time I had been clean in 18 years and how do I not use [drugs] without any help, right? So it lasted a week.”

For many of the women who participated in this project, using meant repeated cycles of criminalization:

“I told them that I was a drug addict for a long time. That I needed methadone and if I didn’t have it that basically I knew I was going to re-offend. You don’t just do drugs for all that time, go out, and say okay just because I have been clean for seven months it means that I’m never going to do drugs again. It doesn’t happen! For me it meant going back to jail.”(Mother Goose)

“If I use inevitably I end up going to jail, because I will do crime to support my habit.” (Jess)

“I don’t know what the turning point was there, but I ended up using again. It got worse and worse like it always does and then I started writing cheques to get money to get the drugs.”(Sally)

“My addiction brought me back [to jail]. If I wasn’t out using, I wouldn’t be committing the crimes.”(Sam)

Similar to participant reports, Shaw (1994a) also noted that in order to keep women out of provincial jail in the future, they needed treatment for their substance abuse issues.

For those participants who had achieved sobriety, they said that fighting their former addictions was and would continue to be a long-term, and for some, a lifelong battle:

“Just always I struggle with my addiction. There is always that.”(Kelly)

“Like, I don’t know... for me, my addiction is going to be something I’m going to need to work on for a daily basis for the next few years...” (Ellen)

“It’s a fight every day of my life [to stay clean].”(Jodi)

“Oh yeah, it could take the rest of my life for all I know!”(Hailey)

Even for the women who had been “clean” for a lengthy period of time on the outside, temptations existed and were often powerful. As participants reported:

“I can still taste it so it's still an ongoing battle. You are never cured of drugs. I'm still battling it off and on...” (Ann)

“Even though I've got six months under my belt, if you stuck drugs in front of me and you started doing it in front of me, it would be really hard for me! I would have to walk, but it would be really hard for me to say no even after six months, because I couldn't have it in front of me.”(Sunshine)

“I can’t go into a household either where it’s [drugs] there, ’cause I know it would be too hard to say ‘no.’ As soon as I see it, I’ll want it.” (Jody)

Addiction infiltrated every aspect of women’s post-jail experiences. The women in my study spoke profusely about their addictions and the importance of obtaining adequate support to help fight their alcohol and substance abuse issues. For many, “successfully” reintegrating into the community was contingent upon their ability to battle their addictions. While freedom from drug addiction has been identified as being a key factor for “successful” reintegration among women (Hartwell, 2001; O’Brien & Harm, 2002; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Richie, 2001), only a small number of provincially sentenced women in Atlantic Canada have the opportunity to receive addiction treatment. Few women-oriented drug addiction programs exist in the region (Smith & Parriag, 2005). When they are available, women have difficulty accessing treatment programs, because of limited openings, long waiting-lists, and expensive fees.

Community-based Support. The reintegration literature has highlighted the importance of community-based support in the lives of criminalized women as they navigate their transition from inside jail/prison walls into the community (Maidment, 2006a; O’Brien & Harm, 2002; Pollack, 2008; Richie, 2001; Richie, Freudenberg, & Page, 2001; Smith & Parriag, 2005). Similarly, the women in my study believed that securing adequate community support was a vital component for “successful” reintegration.

Community supports identified by participants that provided services to women exiting the correctional system included unemployment centres, educational and skill development programs, mental health workers, counselling services, various religious affiliations, supportive housing, food banks, and clothing depots. In addition, the women listed various

community-based agencies that were available to varying degrees across the region. For example, the YMCA, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Addictions Services, John Howard Society (mandated to provide services to men), Stella Burry Foundation (St. John's), Women Offender Resource Centre (St. John's), Coverdale (Saint John and St. John's) and the Elizabeth Fry Society (Moncton, Saint John, Halifax, and Sydney).

Women-centred community-based organizations, specifically the Elizabeth Fry Society, have been found by the women who access their services to be extremely beneficial (Pollack, 2008). Similarly, participants in my study reported that EFry was very supportive as they transitioned into the community. However, as previously mentioned, such agencies were not available in all areas of the Atlantic Region. For example, the Elizabeth Fry Society only existed in the larger metropolitan areas. But even then, not all of the more densely populated "cities" in the Atlantic Region had services for criminalized women. Participants reported a lack of women-centred agencies, and community-based supports in general, in such places as Charlottetown and Fredericton. For example, when I asked Charlene if there were any women-centred supports for criminalized women in the community she lived in, she said:

"Nope. If there is, I've never heard of it, which I'm sure I would have. Yeah, there's nothing!"

Similarly, in their study on the reintegration needs of criminalized women in Prince Edward Island, Smith & Parriag (2005) reported that the absence of a community-based centre, like the Elizabeth Fry Society, in Charlottetown was particularly problematic for women residing on the Island.

In the cities where supports were available for criminalized women, there was generally only one, maybe two, community-based organizations that existed in the area. When I asked Kelly to identify any community supports available to her she said:

“EFry and there is nothing else!”

Participants said that these women-centred, non-profit organizations could not meet the demand of the women they served. For instance, Butterfly said:

“The ones [community-based agencies] that we do have, they’re so limited and there is so many of us.”

Women complained that the overload that community-based organizations experienced and limited resources made it difficult to provide consistent, meaningful support to a large number of women in need of specialized services and support. As two participants reported:

“EFry is good. It’s really good, but I just find it wasn’t consistent anymore. Like, they are so busy with overload, they can’t give you the one-on-one at a time that a person needs just with that kind of person. Just to help build a plan if you don’t have any visits here [in jail]. Just to get a foundation... It’s not there. Like, just to give you structure, help you, and go from there pretty much.” (Kelly)

Funding was not the only obstruction to service provision. Strict admittance criteria made many community-based supports and treatment programs inaccessible to criminalized women (Smith & Parriag, 2005). Given that few services were available in the region, they were often in high demand. Women frequently had to put their names on lengthy waiting lists in order to be admitted to programming in their communities. Similar to reports by the women in my study, long wait lists have been identified as a significant barrier to treatment for women in the Atlantic Region (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005;

Maidment, 2006a; Smith & Parriag, 2005). In addition, another challenge participants experienced in accessing community-based supports was limited operational hours. For example, most agencies offered their services during conventional business hours only, which did not always fit with the women's needs. As Sug said:

“If they [criminalized women] want to come in and talk to anybody or need support with anything, like, just someone always gonna be there. Like, Elizabeth Fry or whatever that thing is, it's only open certain hours a day when you call it and some days there is girls that want... like, on the weekend they want to talk to somebody, and they go to call and there is no one there during the weekend.”

Given systemic barriers to service provision in Atlantic Canada, it was not surprising that the women reported a general lack of community-based supports throughout the region. A shortage of available services to support women returning to the community has been recognized in the literature as being particularly problematic (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005; Richie, 2001; Maidment, 2006a; Pollack, 2008). In fact, O'Brien and Harm (2002) identified the presence or absence of community-based programming as one of the major determining factors in women's reintegration. The scarcity of community support in the Atlantic Region significantly impacted participant's post-jail lives.

The women reported little support from community-based organizations as they transitioned from jail to the community. As Kelly said:

“I think it's hard to go back and I didn't find there was a lot there for me to help me get back into [the community]... my first sentence was for six months and I was in here [jail] for six months so the transition to go back was hard.”

Participants largely attributed the lack of support from community-based organization to the fact that they rarely received help from provincial corrections in connecting them to available services in the community prior to their release. The women had to find support systems on their own. As two of the participants noted:

“[I]t’s up to you to kind of search for what you need and where you need to go.”(Ellen)

“I’ve had to do it on my own... it’s the same with a lot of people out there that needed this or needed that and they don’t get it.”(April)

This finding is similar to the literature, which acknowledges that despite the fact that criminalized women require assistance in matching their needs to available resources in the community, they rarely receive such support (Eaton, 1993). Similar to what Pollack (2008) found in her study with women released from federal prison, the women who participated in my research were unfamiliar with community resources. For example, participants reported:

“I don’t know who to talk to out there. I don’t know who to go to or anything.”(Girly)

“[I was] feeling edgy [about returning to the community], like, not knowing where to go for services.”(Mary)

For the most part, participants did not know whom to turn to in the community or where to go for help despite desperately wanting support.

Participants’ lack of awareness of community-based services was often a direct result of the fact that these services simply did not exist on the East Coast. As noted earlier in this section, there was a shortage of community-based organizations to support criminalized

women in the region. A large proportion of Atlantic communities literally did not have any services or supports available for criminalized women. As participants explained:

“And there is nothing out there to offer me. Nothing!” (Jenna)

“And the community that I am going to, there’s nothing there. There is no programming for females or anything! They do have a John Howard Society, but it’s geared towards federal men, but not for females. Nothing! They don’t have Coverdale, EFry or anything like that.”(Candy)

Studies from Atlantic Canada have noted an absence of localized supports to assist criminalized women once they are released into the community (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005; Maidment, 2006a; Micucci & Monster, 2004; Smith & Parriag, 2005). Many women were left without *any* community support upon release, which made it particularly challenging for them to reintegrate back into their communities.

Due to the fact that few services existed in the Atlantic Region to support women as they navigated their journey back to the community, it was not surprising that participants felt isolated in their experiences. The culmination of isolation and a lack of community support significantly contributed to the cyclical nature of women’s criminalization. As Sug said:

“I wasn’t getting the help that I needed at the time, then I just did it on my own, and I got sent back [to jail].”

For Sug and many others, lack of assistance in the community resulted in repeated periods of criminalization and incarceration. For example, participants reported:

“If you don’t have any supports behind you, then you’re not going to do anything! You’re just going to go back to the old life again.” (Ann)

“You are not getting help quick enough... so people wind up stealing and going back [to jail] again.” (Lauren)

The lack of aftercare that women received upon returning to the community has been identified in the literature as a significant factor in predicting future criminalization (Richie, Freudenberg, & Page, 2001). The findings from my study illustrate that few community supports and limited resources available to assist women as they transitioned from jail to the community often led to reconvictions. Without community-based support, women did not receive help in addressing their underlying issues and were isolated in their post-jail experiences, which according to the women contributed to the cyclical nature of their criminalization.

Adjusting to Life on the Outside. In addition to facing such large-scale issues as poverty, lack of affordable housing, and addictions, the women also found it particularly challenging to readjust to simple everyday tasks people often take for granted. As described in the previous chapter, women’s thoughts, behaviours, and identities become significantly influenced by the routinization, regulation, and control of the rigid jail environment. As a result, many women became “institutionalized” and found it difficult to eradicate that mindset once they were no longer confined. Women had a routine on the inside and as O’Brien and Harm (2002) pointed out, it is not easy for them to adjust to the loss of routine once they are back in the community. While incarcerated, decisions are made for the women, they are stripped of any personal choices, their actions are regulated, daily activities are planned, and their basic needs are taken care of by the system, all of which hinder women’s ability to adjust to life on the outside. However, it was more than just the “routinization” that women were subjected to while incarcerated that made it difficult for

them to adapt to life in the “free world.” The rigidity of the jail environment and the side-effects of being confined made it exceptionally difficult for participants once they were released. For example, Jody said:

“[I]t’s scary when you got to leave here [jail] being in such a secluded place, having a routine set for you, and having to go back home and being able to do what you want, when you are so used to being confined. It’s a different way to being able to adjust. It’s very challenging.”

It was arduous for the women, after becoming immersed in jail life, to get used to doing things for themselves once they were back in the community. As Sug described:

“It was nice to get out, but once I got out I didn’t know what to do with myself. I didn’t know how to fill my time in. I was prepared to come out, but then I wasn’t. I never... just being in the system so long and just getting used to a daily thing. Like, just waking up, doing the same stuff...”

Many women had to adjust to even the most mundane “normal” things people carried out on a daily basis without much thought. For example, participants from one of the focus groups reported:

Michelle: Around every corner is a challenge.

Jenna: You have to get used to making your own decisions.

Lauren: Yeah!

Jenna: We don’t make any decisions in here.

Sam: No!

Lauren: Opening a door again by yourself!

Michelle: 7 o'clock, 11 o'clock, and 4 o'clock our stomachs are going to be growling.

Group: Yeah (Laughing)!

Jessica: To be able to touch your child or your husband!

Jenna: Silverware again!

Michelle: A real toilet!

Given the abundance of commonplace things women had to become re-accustomed to after being incarcerated, it was not surprising that women came up against a plethora of challenges once they exited the provincial correctional system. Many women found it difficult just to experience freedom again and be outside of the confines of the jail environment. As Daisy revealed about her release experience:

“I mean I was excited [to get out], but it was a shock! It was, oh my god, and then just seeing the outside, everything being so open when you've lived in such a confined, confined, sterile, sterile, sterile environment; a very cold environment! It was very surreal!”

For many women, circumstances had changed in the community while they were in jail, especially for those serving longer provincial sentences. For example, Daisy explained:

“So the challenges facing [women] that would be cultural shock and then again to readjust to come back to your life; everything's changed! A year and a half; a lot changes!”

Due to the fact that women experienced extreme isolation on the inside and became “institutionalized” as a result of the rigid jail environment participants found it difficult to “fit in” with the rest of society once they exited the provincial correctional system. The

women felt completely “othered” by the criminalization process. For instance, when Kelly was asked what kind of challenges she expected to face upon re-entry, she said:

“... just trying to be like regular people.”

Not only did women struggle with such larger social systemic issues as poverty immediately upon release, but they also had to cope with everyday tasks from a new standpoint as a result of their incarceration experiences. The women who participated in this study said that just having to readjust to using a regular toilet, eating with metal silverware instead of plastic, being able to physically reconnect with love ones, and having the ability to open a door at your own discretion really exemplified how difficult it was for women to return to the community.

Family and Peer Relationships. Reconnecting with others and having supportive interpersonal relationships has been identified in the literature as being crucial for women as they navigate their transition from jail to the community (Eaton, 1993; Maidment, 2006a; O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b). Relationships, or the lack of, played a major role in participants’ lives and significantly influenced their reintegration experiences. Participants discussed in depth the nature of their relationships with both peers and family. Similar to the literature (Leverentz, 2006; O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O’Brien & Harm, 2002; O’Brien & Lee, 2006; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Richie, 2001), the women who participated in this study said that having a supportive family-network, or even one family member to depend on, was an invaluable source of support for women upon re-entry. As participants noted:

“Family, I have a great family. They are very supportive. I have kids. They’re still with me. I have great support in that respect.”(Jenna)

“Family is a huge support! A huge support!”(Daisy)

“My family supported me in ways that I never thought they’d be able to help me.” (Mary)

Participants who had supportive family-networks to go home to looked forward to returning to their families upon release. The mental anguish women experienced from being separated from their children while incarcerated was almost unbearable and they longed to reconnect with their children once they were back in the community. As Evans (2006) pointed out, the health and well-being of children are very compelling concerns among incarcerated women. Many participants reported that returning to their families was of the utmost importance as they exited the provincial correctional system:

“I want to be with my family.”(Sally)

“When I got out, all I know is that I just went back to my family.” (Girly)

Family support is a vital reintegration component and a major factor that often differentiates between women who are “successful” and those who continue to cycle through the correctional system (Maidment, 2006a). The participants in this study said that family support was influential in protecting them and other women from future criminalization. Despite the fact that supportive family relationships were identified as a fundamental element that promoted positive reintegration experiences, very few women actually had a family network they could depend on upon re-entry. As participants noted:

“[P]eople who do have that [family], they probably stay out longer, but people that don’t, that makes a person feel bad you know. It is hard without having family.” (Summer)

“I’ve been very lucky to have a very good family support, but not many people have got that.” (Ellen)

While family could be the best part of returning to the community, it could also be a negative aspect of the reintegration process for women (O’Brien & Harm, 2002). Previous studies have found that criminalized women often do not have supportive family networks waiting for them on the outside (Evans, 2006; Maidment, 2006a). Similarly, many women did not have the support of family members upon release. As Jody bluntly stated:

“I don’t really socialize with my family.”

Families were often a major source of conflict for women who have been imprisoned (O’Brien & Harm, 2002). As Evans (2006) noted, feelings of anger and resentment towards women were common among family members. Many women were abandoned by their families as a result of their criminalization (Evans, 2006). Furthermore, as the women noted, histories of criminalization often divided families. As Jennifer explained:

“My sister basically thinks I’m a piece of shit now that I’m in jail.”

In addition to the negative views families may hold towards the women, family members themselves could be toxic for women leaving jail. Often times, addictions and a history of crime did not only affect one individual in the family unit. Subsequently, for their own well-being, women frequently had no choice but to separate themselves from their family and/or relatives. For example, April reported:

“I’ve kinda stayed away from my family a bit, because this is like a family thing. Everybody in my family is involved in it, so I got to stay away from them. That’s been a bit hard.”

Even though families could be a source of tension and conflict, it was emotionally difficult for women to disassociate themselves from loved ones. As Summer noted:

“It is hard without having family.”

Without the support of family, women were isolated in their reintegration experiences. Furthermore, feelings of isolation were exacerbated, because women exiting the correctional system were also frequently devoid of a strong social support network to assist them in the transition process.

For many women, just as family members could be toxic, former social networks were often no longer healthy once women were clean and wanted to maintain a different lifestyle. As depicted earlier in the chapter, women often had to remove themselves from peer relationships that put them at risk of using drugs and/or further criminalization. For example, participants said:

“[K]nowing that you gotta stay away from friends, certain ones, [and] certain things that you do, it’s really challenging, especially when you are into drugs or alcohol and mostly everybody else you know is in that situation.” (Jody)

“[You have to] stay away from people that get you in trouble.”(Sally)

“I didn’t have any friends [after being in jail], because all the friends I had from before that were friends I didn’t really want to continue to have.” (Kelly)

Similar to the situation of disassociating themselves from family members, losing one’s social network had a negative impact on the women’s overall well-being. The dissolution of their former peer network emotionally taxed participants:

“So, you gotta basically give up everybody, and it’s easier said than done.”

(Jody)

“Having to just readjust back into society again comfortably where I wouldn't have a relapse, because of depression when I had no friends.” (Daisy)

“So, there's that nervousness [when you're released] of where you're going to go, what you're going to do, and who you're going to hang with.”(Ellen)

It was difficult for women to establish a whole new peer network. Given the enormous challenges women experienced in trying to meet immediate needs (e.g., securing financial resources, obtaining affordable housing, fighting their addictions, etc.) upon their release, participants struggled to seek out companionship as they transitioned back into the community. Not surprisingly, women were often alone and isolated in their reintegration experiences.

Without supportive networks in place on the outside, it was difficult for participants to leave behind the women they had come to know and form bonds with while incarcerated. Participants found solace in the other women who provided comfort and support on the inside. For example, when I asked Jess to describe the feelings associated with her transition period, she explained:

“Maybe loneliness, because you're used to being among, such as it is, twenty or thirty other women in a county jail. So, yah a little of that, you become used to being around people... and now suddenly you are in a little apartment and you are alone. I remember feeling that way... lonely.”

It was challenging for participants to reintegrate without the companionship of people who had similar experiences.

“I think the biggest thing is being alone with a lot of my issues.” (Jody)

“You’re kinda getting out and then you’re alone. It’s harder to deal with rather than having someone who is around there all the time to talk to or help you figure things out.” (Ellen)

“I would have to say not to isolate and to talk to other, if possible at all, to talk to other women who’ve been there.”(Jess)

Furthermore, as Pollack (2008) highlights, parole and probation stipulations make it practically impossible for many women to gain support from those whom they feel most at ease. So, despite wanting the companionship of women with shared experiences, women were often prohibited from forming such relationships upon release.

Participants noted that it would be less complicated to meet and receive support from women with similar backgrounds if peer support groups existed in the community. Peer support has been detailed in the literature as an invaluable aspect of the reintegration process (Pollack, 2008; Smith & Parriag, 2005). However, very few peer support options are available in the Atlantic Region. Smith and Parriag (2005) identified the lack of peer support groups as a major reintegration obstacle for criminalized women.

The lack of support that women received as they navigated their transition from inside jail to the community was a significant barrier for “making it.” There is no question that having to disassociate oneself from former friends and family members was emotionally challenging for women as they tried to re-establish themselves in the community. The absence of supportive relationships and social networks, coupled with the shortage of community-based supports as noted in the previous section, intensified women’s feelings of isolation in the reintegration process. However, for those women who had even one support person on the outside, their reintegration experiences were more positive than women who

reported no support systems in their lives. Subsequently, this study highlights the need for formalized community-based peer support groups for women exiting the correctional system as a means of promoting positive reintegration experiences.

Stigma and Shame. The stigma criminalized women face as they navigate their journey from behind jail/prison walls to the community has long been recognized in the literature as significantly impacting one's reintegration experience (Evans, 2006; Maidment, 2006a; O'Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; Pollack, 2008). The stigma attached to women's criminalization and imprisonment is often times one of the greatest challenges women face in the community (Evans, 2006; Pollack, 2008). O'Brien and Harm (2002) argued that the stigma and shame associated with being incarcerated leads to feelings of social exclusion. The women who participated in my study said that the stigma of having a history of imprisonment played a significant role in their inability to feel a sense of belonging in their communities. For example, participants said they were judged and viewed negatively by the rest of society. As Ellen explained:

“[P]eople assume things and they gossip. They are very ignorant here to how things really are or who people really are. I find they're very judgemental.”

Participants felt like society had a misguided belief about criminalized women and viewed them as “bad” people just because of their criminalization histories. For instance, participants noted:

“Majority of people in society think you're bad. You're in jail, you're bad!”(Charlene)

“I suppose people do look down on people who've been incarcerated. They think we're all really bad people, but they don't even know the half of who these

people are. Just because you get into a little bit of trouble... you make a mistake, it doesn't mean that you're evil, nasty person." (Jodi)

"I think people need to lose the fear of the individual... it's not about a person being bad or evil, the majority of women that are there [in jail] are there because they're addicted to drugs and alcohol and they need to be given a chance. If they're never given the chance they will repeat that lifecycle again. What you do doesn't determine who you are... 'cause there is such a big stigma, people who think that way." (Jess)

Similar to my participants, Pollack (2008) found that the women in her study who were released from federal prisons felt judged and misunderstood by those in the community who did not share common experiences.

Criminalized women suffer widespread discrimination that is often debilitating (Evans, 2006). The women in my study had a hard time getting rid of the negative characteristics and subsequent labels they acquired from past behaviours that were seen by society as "deviant" or "criminal." As Charlene said:

"...people automatically place that [label] on you so it was hard for me to get rid of that and you get labelled and it's really hard to get rid of the label. It's really hard! It's still hard for me! It's just really hard!"

Participants said that they repeatedly ran into people in the community who assumed that they carried forward similar patterns of behaviour or traits after their time in jail, despite making positive changes in their lives. As Jess said:

“I would have to say, like, people that I knew years ago think I’m the same person I was years ago and I’m simply not. So, you are faced with that whole, I guess again, stigma. I’m definitely not the person that I used to be.”

The stigma associated with past actions made it difficult for participants to move on with their lives and made their transition experiences challenging. For example, April noted:

“It’s been hard. Everybody knows what I do. I can’t hide it here, so then it’s like [I’m] getting phone calls, like, I need this or I need that...”

Participants did not want people in the community to know about their criminalization experiences or periods of incarceration. However, in small towns across Atlantic Canada people knew each other’s business. When Sally described her experience of reintegrating into the community she said:

“There was a lot of negativity. I felt that I was looked down upon. I was frowned upon. I felt that I wasn’t given much of a chance in my particular community, because of the trouble I had gotten into. It’s a small community and everybody talks, and so it was kind of a negative experience for me.”

In the Atlantic Region, small tight-knit communities led to increased exposure and gossip about women’s criminalization and incarceration experiences. Participants found it extremely difficult to break-free from the stigma and shame associated with their past, because many of their crimes had been publicized in the local media. As Charlene explained:

“Everybody knows. It’s on the radio sometimes, like, it’s just ridiculous!”

Having people's criminalization histories detailed in the local newspaper or passed on through gossip was described by participants as hurtful and emotionally upsetting. For example, participants said:

"It'd extremely humiliating! It's terrible. It's horrible! Terrible! Everybody reading your business."(Sally)

"I think that's been the biggest difficulty is just trying to live the name down I guess... People assume that I'm somebody I'm not just because of what they've heard." (Ellen)

The stigma associated with their criminal histories caused many of the women who participated in this project to feel ashamed about their past, which made it challenging for them to move on with their lives. A lot of the women said that the reintegration process was challenging because of what they had done, where they had been, and the shame they felt. As Kelly described:

"[O]nce you are in here [jail] and then you get out of here you feel kinda like... you're really down on yourself and you think people look at you like that, but maybe they don't, but you feel like that. So just to hold your head up and trying to get your foot out there to go and get back out there."

Participants found it difficult to forgive themselves for their past mistakes and the life they had once lived. They carried with them an abundance of self-blame that was often unrelenting. As participants noted:

"I think your biggest thing is choosing to forgive yourself or getting to a point where you don't blame yourself anymore, because there's a lot of guilt and

shame that comes along with it when you are involved in criminal activity or drugs or addiction.” (Ellen)

“[T]here is a lot of shame surrounding the whole thing you know and you’re really hard on yourself...” (Jess)

The women said that constantly being looked down upon and judged by society often contributed to women going back to their old ways. For example, Charlene reported:

“People automatically think that you’re bad or you can’t be trusted... so, I don’t know, you deal with a lot of shame I guess when you get out. That’s been a big thing; ashamed of yourself and you end up repeating the cycle because there is no other options available. If someone tells you something long enough, you’re eventually going to believe it!”

Similarly, O’Brien (2001b) argued that women’s very selfhood frequently becomes defined by the crimes they commit and the related stigma that follows them on the street, which often causes women to fall back into former criminalization patterns after imprisonment.

The findings from this study support the literature, which identifies stigma as a barrier to positive reintegration experiences (Evans, 2006; Leverentz, 2006; Maidment, 2006a; O’Brien, 2001b; O’Brien & Harm, 2002; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Pollack, 2008; Richie, 2001). The stigma women experience because of their past behaviours often leads to debilitating feelings of shame. In many instances, the social exclusion women experience from the stigma associated with criminalization and imprisonment makes them feel as though there are no viable alternatives but to revert to their former lives.

Personal Capacities. Individual characteristics such as resiliency, self-confidence, and personal choice have been identified in the literature as key facets of the reintegration

process (O'Brien, 2001b; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; Richie, 2001). The women who participated in this study acknowledged the importance of intrapersonal capacities and resiliency as they navigated their journey from inside provincial jail walls into the community. The ability to make personal choices was an important quality participants said that women needed to possess as they exited the provincial correctional system. In jail, women lost the power to make personal choices that influenced their lives. The rigidity of the jail environment stripped women of their ability to have control over important decisions that impacted their future. As Ella explained:

“When you come in the jail, essentially you can’t make any decisions. They [corrections] deem that you make bad decisions and strangely they don’t let you make decisions when you get here. They don’t give you the opportunity to get better at making decisions.”

The women said that on the outside they wanted to gain back their independence and make decisions for themselves. Having the opportunity to identify individual needs and provide input about the supports and services they believed would make a substantial difference in their lives was important. It was clear to me that the women did not want people exerting power over them by telling them what to do, what programs to take, and what their lives should look like once they were back in the community. As April described:

“Every other time I came out, I came out with nothing, so this [employment program] is a good thing and they didn’t tell me I had to do the course. I did that on my own, so that was another good thing. They [correctional personnel] usually send me home saying, ‘You’re going to see

a psychologist here and you're gonna do this and you're gonna do that.'
They tried to put me on medication and none of that worked. This is what's
working, is what I want to do instead of them telling me, 'No you have to do
it.' I don't want to do it if you tell me I have to and that's the way they work
out there [at the correctional facility]. They don't come to you and see what
you want. They tell you what you need and you're gonna do it! I didn't want
to do it!"

When women were forced into participating in certain programs, services, or utilizing supports, they did not always welcome the opportunity. Often times these supports were not beneficial in meeting the women's needs and they wanted a voice in defining their own experiences and identifying the types of programming, services, and support that were relevant to their individual needs. As participants noted:

"I was forced before. This time now it is my decision." (Sam)

"The woman has to want to do it herself. You can't be forced to do anything else
people say. If you're not ready to change or you're not ready to better your life
then it doesn't matter what is out there. It's not going to make a difference.

Basically it is going to be up to the person, but usually when they are in jail for a
period of time, most people coming out... are wanting the change, they are
wanting the help."(Ellen)

Once women were able to decide for themselves what they needed, they were more likely to be successful in reaching their goals and having positive reintegration experiences.

In addition to taking control and making informed decisions about their lives, participants also said it was essential in the reintegration process to have a strong belief in oneself as they entered the community. For example, Ann exclaimed:

“[I]f you think that you're gonna make it, then you're gonna make it!”

Having a positive attitude and strong belief in oneself was indispensable for women as they rebuilt their lives in the community. As Ann explained:

“If you're coming out of jail and have a positive attitude and major support coming out and if you think that you're gonna make it, then you're gonna make it, but if you think you're not going to make it, no you're going to fall on your face.”

Participants talked about the need for women coming out of jail find inner strength to and move forward. As Kelly said:

“...stay strong and to look forward and hold your head up and do what you can do for yourself.”

Women's ability to bounce back from the adversities they have faced prior to their incarceration, during imprisonment, and upon return to the community significantly impacts their reintegration (O'Brien, 2001b; O'Brien & Harm, 2002). There was a consensus among the women who participated in this study that it was imperative for women to forge ahead despite the multitude of adversity they experienced in their lives. As Butterfly asserted:

“Don't give up!”

Participants stressed the importance of not letting former experiences define their identity and persevering despite the opposition they constantly face as a result of their criminalization. As Sally explained:

“...everybody’s made mistakes, and you just have to hold your head up high and be the person that you always were and don’t let people bring you down, because bringing you down can lead to other things.”

Having faith in oneself helped women move on with their lives and provided them with the foundation to reach personal goals and transform their lives. As April unequivocally stated:

“This time around it would be... you know if you want something you have to go for it and don’t let anybody hold you back. Anything is reachable!”

Similarly, when I asked the women what advice they had for others who may find themselves in similar situations, participants said:

“...my advice would be to keep your head up. Just remember the road you plan on going and stick to it. Stick to your plan!”(Hailey)

O’Brien (2001b) stated that women’s “success” begins with the women themselves as active participants in the social world, rather than passive objects. The findings from this study show that personal capacities such as resiliency, the power to make personal choices, and believing in oneself were important qualities women needed to possess in order to persevere once they exited the provincial correctional system. Although individual qualities were vital for positive reintegration experiences among the women who participated in my study, larger environmental and social systemic issues often made it difficult for them to believe they could “make it.” Even when women possessed the internal drive to make

positive changes in their post-jail lives, their position of marginalization and the economic hardship they faced usually pre-empted them from breaking-free of the criminalization cycle.

CHAPTER SIX: A FEMINIST ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF REINTEGRATION AND PREVENTION

From the standpoint of the women who participated in this study, it was evident that the transition from incarceration to the community is a complex process. In this chapter, I propose a feminist ecological framework, which allows the complexities of women's incarceration and reintegration experiences to be understood and addressed through a gendered lens across multiple levels, including individual, relational, environmental, *and* societal factors (see Figure 3 below). The framework can also be used as a guide for prevention, as addressing the factors identified can protect against future criminalization among women. Under each section of the model, I also describe the supports that participants expressed as being particularly helpful for meeting the needs of women both in jail and in the community.

Individual

In an ecological paradigm, the individual represents the nucleus of the model, nested within multiple social systems. By adopting an ecological model to understand and address women's transition experiences from a feminist perspective, I have placed women at the heart of the reintegration framework I propose. In the past, many criminological and psychological theories and practices have focused on the individual, individualizing and pathologizing women's criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration. However, this is not my intention. Instead, I have situated the individual at the core of the framework to

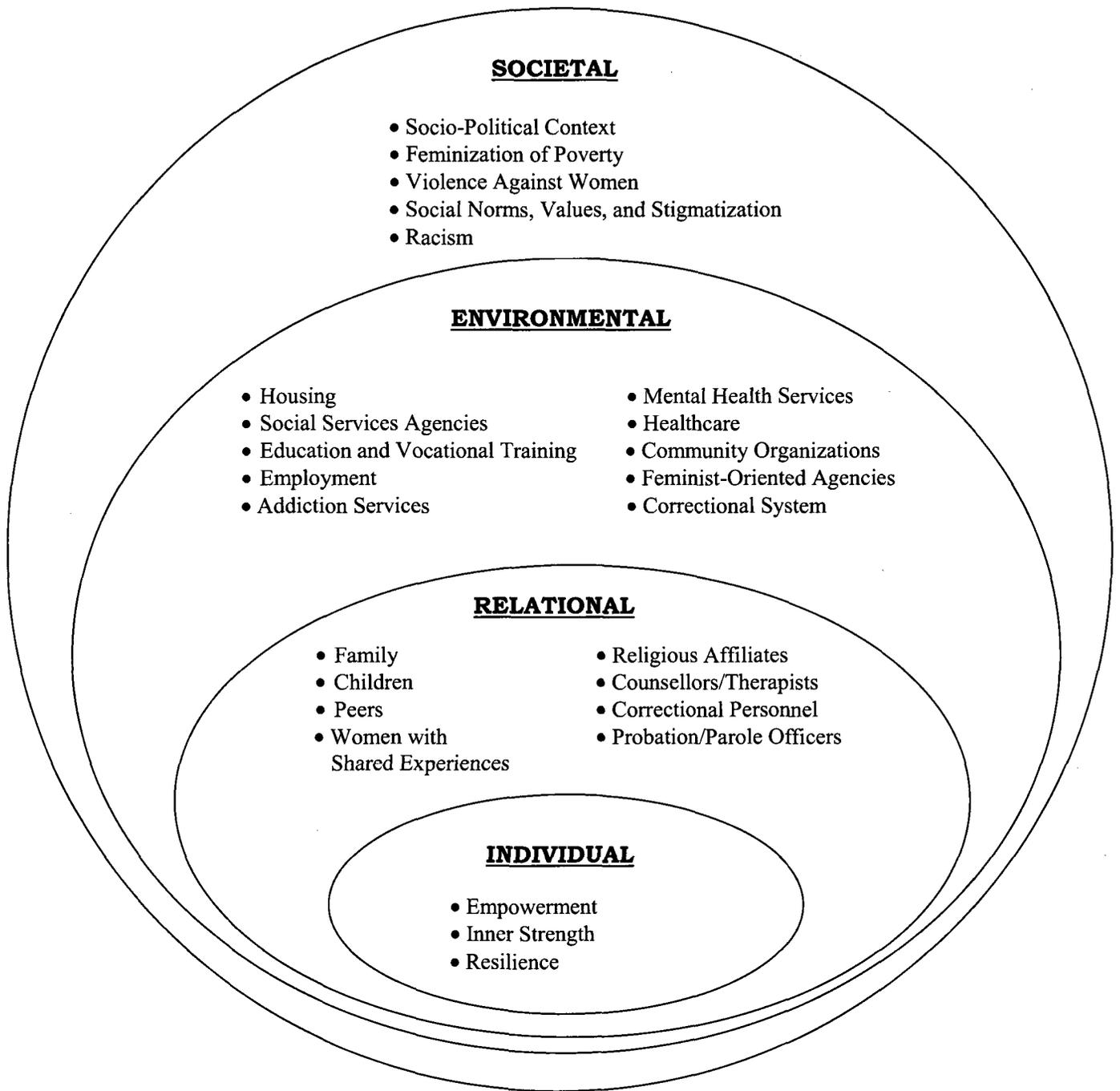


Figure 3. A Feminist Ecological Framework of Reintegration and Prevention

illustrate the importance of placing women at the centre of their own lives. From the standpoint of the women who participated in this project, there were three key intrapersonal factors that influenced their reintegration experiences. Empowerment, inner strength, and resilience represented a starting point for women as they made the difficult transition from jail to the community.

Empowerment. Supporting the reintegration literature citing empowerment as an important internal capacity among women making the difficult transition from incarceration to the community (see Henriques & Jones-Brown, 2008; O'Brien, 2001a, 2001b; Richie, Freudenberg, & Page, 2001), the women who participated in this study viewed empowerment as a fundamental component of reintegration. Participants identified the ability to create one's own pathway, acquire some control over one's life, gain independence, as well as have choices available and a more equitable distribution of social resources as key aspects of personal and political empowerment. However, they were rarely given the platform to engage in these types of empowering activities within the provincial correctional system or in the community given their position of marginalization.

Participants stressed the importance of providing provincially sentenced women with opportunities to engage in one-on-one therapeutic supports both on the inside and in the community to promote personal empowerment. The women were tired of being told what was "wrong" with them and how to "fix" their problems and wanted some control over the types of programming, services, support, and treatment they received. To gain a sense of power in shaping their own pathways, participants said it was important to engage in therapeutic relationships, both on the inside and out, that allowed them to identify their individual needs and make decisions about their treatment and healing. Allowing women

the opportunity to articulate their own needs within a therapeutic setting and to be a part of their own healing has been found to be particularly transformative for criminalized women (Pollack & Brezina, 2006).

The women who participated in this study also said that empowerment could be cultivated through peer support and group activities. Participants called for access to personal skill-development programs in group settings, such as cooking and nutrition, cleaning and laundry, parenting, as well as financial planning and management as a means of readjusting to life on the outside and gaining independence in their daily lives. Additionally, identifying, addressing, and working towards overcoming the challenges (both personal and societal) women faced upon returning to the community within a supportive group environment was seen by participants as a core aspect of empowerment programming. Peer support groups that commenced on the inside and continued upon re-entry were seen as being particularly advantageous in empowering women.

In the past, a focus on empowerment has led to women being individualized and pathologized for their criminalization and “unsuccessful” attempts to reintegrate into society (Pollack, 2000). Feminist community psychologists, such as Riger (1993), have cautioned against traditional notions of empowerment, commonly employed by community psychologists in their ecological analyses of the issues they explore, which focus on traditional masculine concepts of mastery, power, and control over traditional feminist concerns of connectedness. Riger (1993) argues that individualizing empowerment overlooks the role of connectedness in human life and does little to address the larger social influences, such as government policies and access to resources, which limit women’s choices, identities, and actions. She argues that relationality, or connectedness, is an

integral part of empowerment and subsequently the “focus of community psychologists ought to be on understanding how community shapes the person, in part, on conditions that facilitate both efficacy or personal control, and also a sense of community” (Riger, 1993, p. 288). As the stories of the women who participated in this study demonstrated, empowerment is not only an intrapersonal attribute, but must also be framed within the context of their relationships with others, the environmental settings in which they are embedded, and the larger societal forces that contribute to women’s criminalization and work to impede reintegration.

It is exceptionally difficult to promote empowerment within the correctional context. Moving away from individual approaches of empowerment towards activities that incorporate relationships and community connection, such as the peer support groups proposed by the women who participated in this study, would help increase empowerment and autonomy among women within the jail/prison setting. As Pollack (2000) contended, relational activities provide women with the opportunity for critical reflection, skill development, and emotional support, as well as provide an infrastructure for advocacy to address the social aspects that work to disempower women (Pollack, 2000).

Inner Strength. Earlier reintegration studies have noted the importance of inner strength among women as they exit the correctional system, including such personal qualities as self-confidence and determination (Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002), as well as a sense of self-efficacy (O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O’Brien & Harm, 2002). In this study, inner strength (including self-worth, confidence, and determination) was identified as being an important intrapersonal attribute that facilitated “successful” reintegration. Participants, like many women returning to the community after incarceration, often felt a sense of hopelessness as

they faced the daunting task of rebuilding their lives upon re-entry. In order to overcome this feeling, the women argued that they had to believe in themselves, maintain a positive attitude, set and work towards goals, as well as have the personal determination and confidence to “succeed:”

“The main thing is to try and you’ve got to have a goal that you’ve got to be working for. You’ve got to believe in yourself!”(Ellen)

These qualities were difficult to attain within the jail environment and on the outside, as correctional philosophies and practices, as well as the stigmatization that followed imprisonment often eroded women’s sense of self. Participants contended that inner strength could be nurtured through affirmative relationships with others, especially women who shared similar experiences. In particular, the participants said that having the opportunity, both on the inside and outside, to be mentored by positive, peer role models who had made the “successful” transition from jail to the community would give women the determination and confidence in their own abilities to “make it.” As such, they called for peer support and mentoring programs led by former criminalized women to be established within provincial correctional facilities and in communities across the Atlantic Region. Peer support has been shown to be effective in building inner strength in individuals by creating a buffer against harmful events (Siebert, 1996), as well as increasing feelings of self-worth among criminalized women (Boudin, 1998).

Participants also said that inner strength could be cultivated through a connection to community supports and resources. Establishing social support and being linked to community services, programming, and treatment prior to exiting the provincial correctional system provided a sense of security among women that they would not have to

face reintegration on their own, giving them the confidence and strength they needed to set forth on the difficult journey from jail to the community. Thus, participants recommended that release planning be a mandatory component of correctional programming, setting up necessary community supports to address their needs and, at the same time, nurture inner strength and the feeling that they can “make it” upon returning to the community.

The work of Miller (1986, 2008a) and others at the Stone Centre has shown that women’s sense of self and worth is deeply rooted in the development and maintenance of relationships. Miller (2008a) argues, women “find a sense of value and effectiveness if they experience all of their life activity as arising from a context of relationships and as leading on into a greater sense of connection rather than a sense of separation” (p. 369). The women who participated in this study struggled with a sense of isolation both in jail and in the community, lacking affirmative relationships and a sense of community in their lives given their position of marginalization. Thus, providing women with the opportunity to create positive relationships and develop a connectedness to the community would be particularly beneficial in fostering inner strength among women in the provincial correctional system.

Resilience. Supporting previous research identifying internal characteristics that promote “successful” reintegration (see O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O’Brien & Harm, 2002), the women who participated in this study spoke of the importance of resilience as they made their way from inside the jail walls to the community. The women in this study, like many criminalized women, faced multiple hardships in their lives and came up against many challenges both on the inside and as they reintegrated into the community after incarceration. Participants argued that in order to be “successful” upon re-entry, women had to overcome adversities and “bounce back” from the negative events they had experienced,

as well as not let former experiences define their identity as they attempted to rebuild their lives.

The women who participated in the study drew on internal capacities to cope with and “bounce back” from the struggles they experienced both in jail and in the community. Many said they had to search far within themselves to find the strength to persevere. Participants suggested that resiliency could be nurtured through activities that fostered self-worth and self-confidence, such as personal-development programs. Accordingly, they called for individualized development-programs to be implemented in provincial jails and the community to help them find the strength and mindset to “succeed.”

The women who participated in this study also drew on their peers, especially women with shared experiences, to foster resilience. Participants recommended that peer support groups and more opportunities to engage with other women be established within provincial jails and in the community. Lending more support for the establishment of peer networks for criminalized women, the work of the Stone Centre group challenges commonly held beliefs of resilience as an individual characteristic of “toughness” reinforced by traditional psychological theories of development and suggest instead that resiliency be viewed as a relational activity (Hartling, 2008). Relationships, according to the proponents of the Stone Centre, are the primary source of an individual’s ability to be resilient or grow through and beyond experiences of personal and social hardships, adversities, trauma, and alienating social-cultural practices (Hartling, 2008). More specifically, resiliency is strengthened through efforts that promote growth-fostering relationships that enhance intellectual development, as well as sense of worth, competence, empowerment, and most importantly connection (Hartling, 2008).

Hartling (2008) argues that engaging in relationships where the other individual conveys attention to, and recognition of, one's experiences are imperative for strengthening resiliency. Therefore, it is easy to see why the women who participated in this study stressed the importance of engaging in relationships with women with shared experiences, because they could understand firsthand the challenges they experienced and the efforts needed to overcome such hardships. Support, encouragement, and inspiration to triumph over challenges also can come from relationships with parents, families, mentors, peers, and so on. In the lives of criminalized women, relationships with correctional personnel also play a large role, but instead of fostering resiliency, correctional staff are often the ones making it challenging for women to persevere. Efforts that promote empathetic relationships among guards and female prisoners, thus, would prove beneficial in the lives of women in the provincial correctional system.

The findings from this study show that, even though intrapersonal qualities are important for women both in the provincial correctional setting and in the community, empowerment, inner strength, and resilience do not transpire at an individual level alone. Connection within relationships and the community is the vehicle by which these personal attributes are fostered. Feminist community psychologists, such as Bond (1999) have cited the work of the Stone Centre group and their call for growth-enhancing connections as being an important element to consider when examining human behaviour from an ecological perspective, especially for women. Bond (1999) argued that when focusing on the individual, empathetic relationships must be taken into account. Only when others have a mutual respect and willingness to imagine how someone else's life might feel to them, will their experiences be legitimized (Bond, 1999). However, as demonstrated in the

following section, the majority of women who participated in this study lacked mutually empathetic relationships in their lives, contributing to a sense of isolation and disconnection both in the correctional context and the larger community, making reintegration challenging.

Relational

In the ecological model, interpersonal relationships are referred to as microsystems and include interactions with family, friends, educators, and so on. Traditional ecological models proposed by community psychologists typically focus on individual, community, and societal levels of analysis without paying adequate attention to relational connectedness (Rigor, 1993). A gendered or feminist ecological framework, such as the one I propose here, must take into account the various relationships that promote growth and connectedness, as well as the disconnect that ensues from a lack of mutually supportive relationships in people's lives. Although the ability to form and maintain relationships is a fundamental part of humanity (Brabeck & Brabeck, 2006), an inner sense of connection to others is particularly central in women's lives (Miller, 1986, 2008a; Surrey, 1984). As Surrey (1984) explains, "for women, the primary experience of self is relational; that is, the self is organized and developed in the context of important relationships" (p. 2).

Meaningful and supportive personal relationships have been documented in the literature as promoting successful reintegration experiences among criminalized women (Eaton, 1993; Evans, 2006; Leverentz, 2006; Maidment, 2006a; O'Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; O'Brien & Lee, 2006; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Pollack, 2008; Richie, 2001). Relationships were central in the lives of the women who participated in this study and played a large role in their reintegration as well. According to participants,

affirmative relationships helped facilitate “success,” while the absence of supportive relationships hindered their ability to “successfully” reintegrate into the community. From the standpoint of the women who participated in this study there were eight key relationships that influenced women’s criminalization, incarceration, and transition experiences. They included family, children, peers, women with shared experiences, religious affiliates, counsellors or therapists, correctional personnel, as well as probation and parole officers.

Family. Familial relationships play a central role in the lives of women, including the relationships they form with immediate and extended family members, as well as their spouses or partners. While family-bonds remain a fundamental element of human existence, the compositions of families have changed over the years for both women and men. For example, although men and women are equally as likely to be living with a family member, such as a parent or relative, it is now more common for men to be living with a spouse or common-law partner than it is for women (Statistics Canada, 2006b). In fact, a substantially larger proportion of women are living on their own now than in the past, more than doubling over the past 40 years (Statistics Canada, 2006b). As such, the availability of support women can draw upon from familial and intimate relationships has also changed, with women being less likely than men to have the support of a spouse or partner.

A large proportion of the female prison/jail population consist of single women who do not have the support of a spouse or partner to draw from while they are incarcerated or as they make the difficult transition back to the community. In sharp contrast, men typically have a partner or family member they can rely on while incarcerated, providing emotional support, taking care of the household and children in their absence, and waiting for them to

return home upon their release. Without having a spouse or common-law partner, women are more likely than men to have to rebuild their lives on their own up re-entry.

Having family to rely on while incarcerated is further complicated for criminalized women, as opposed to male prisoners, as they are more likely than men are to be incarcerated in facilities located far from their loved ones. The fact that women comprise a smaller proportion of the correctional population means that fewer facilities are designed to hold women. As a result, women are more likely than men are to be dislocated from their communities, as well as their families. Therefore, even when incarcerated women have family members and partners in their lives who may be able to provide support, the physical location of the correctional facilities often creates barriers to receiving such support.

The majority of women who participated in this study were single and spoke of the impact familial relationships had on their lives— whether negative or positive. Some women had the support of loved ones, while others were estranged from their families because of their criminalization and incarceration histories or because family members were associated with their past and, consequently, a negative influence in their lives. Furthermore, many of the women in this study were incarcerated in provincial correctional facilities that were considerable distances from their families, making it difficult to draw on loved ones for emotional and physical support. Women without familial support experienced many emotional and physical challenges – both on the inside and upon returning to the community.

Maintaining positive relationships and reconnecting with family, as well as mending fractured relationships was seen by the women in this study as being particularly important.

Participants desperately wanted more opportunities for one-on-one counselling to be made available to women within the provincial correctional system and in Atlantic communities. They wanted help coping with the reality that they may not have anyone in their family to turn to for support, dealing with the emotional scars that often lingered, as well as finding ways to repair those relationships that they wanted to salvage.

Children. “Perhaps one of the most significant and life-changing relationships for a woman is the relationship between herself and her child” (Brabeck & Brabeck, 2006, p. 211). Although the relationships that mothers have with their children fill them with joy and love, the pressures of being responsible for the well-being of another life can also be, at times, overwhelming and stressful (Brabeck & Brabeck, 2006). A shift in family dynamics in recent years has also placed increasing pressures on women, with more and more mothers raising children as lone parents. In Canada, there are now over one million women bringing up children on their own – almost double the statistic from 20 years earlier (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

Although the number of women heading lone-parent families account for a large proportion of all families throughout the country, variations exist based on geographic location (Statistics Canada, 2006b). In the Atlantic Region, the proportion of female lone-parent families in Nova Scotia is the second largest in all of Canada– second only to the Yukon Territories. In addition, in comparison to other provinces, there are a significantly greater number of women in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island raising children on their own. Regardless of where women reside, however, more women than men head lone-parent families and single mothers are three times more likely to be living below the poverty line than lone-parent families headed by men (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

A large proportion of criminalized women are mothers— many of them single parents. Children have a profound effect on women’s incarceration and reintegration experiences (O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O’Brien & Harm, 2002; O’Brien & Lee, 2006; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Richie, 2001). In fact, worrying about the well-being of children is often the most stressful aspect of imprisonment for women (Belknap, 2001; Bloom & Steinhart, 1993; Boudin, 1997; Farrell, 1998; Mayhew, 1994; Owen, 1998; Richie, 2001). One reason that women are more likely than men to feel the emotional hardships of being separated from their children during incarceration is that more women than men have their children living with them prior to going to jail/prison (Phillips & Harm, 1998; Mumola, 2000) and have a more difficult time finding a home for their child/children (Rafter, 1985). Unlike imprisoned fathers who typically rely on their children’s mothers to care for the children while they are incarcerated, women are less likely to have the child’s father available to assume parenting and must place them in someone else’s care (Belknap, 2001; Enos, 1997; Schafer & Dellinger, 1999). Subsequently, more women than men struggle with the stress of possibly losing custody of their children (Carcedo, Lopez, Begona Orgaz, Toth, and Fernandez-Rouco, 2008). In addition, men have access to a greater number of jails/prisons that allow them to stay in closer proximity to their children. Women, on the other hand, are often housed in correctional facilities outside of their communities, making it difficult for them to maintain contact with their children during incarceration (Belknap, 2001).

Children were instrumental in promoting positive reintegration experiences among the women who participated in this study. Maintaining relationships with children during incarceration was of utmost importance. However, this study showed that the jail environment made it difficult for women to achieve this goal. For one, there are few jails in

the Atlantic Region that have female units and as a result the majority of mothers who participated were housed in facilities located considerable distances from their children. In addition, restrictions were placed on correspondence and visitations in the provincial correctional system, which made it even more challenging for women to stay in touch with their children. As a result, the majority of women in this study who were mothers rarely saw their daughters and sons, and felt disconnected from their children while on the inside. It was especially difficult for women to leave their children in the care of others while they were incarcerated, which only added to the stress of not seeing them.

Participants had numerous suggestions for change to better support mothers entangled within the provincial correctional system. First, they recommended that women be given greater access to telephones and suitable visitation spaces in provincial jails. As Ellen said:

“I think definitely something more around the family and children and having access to them while you’re still in jail. I think that is something that needs to open up, especially visitation around the family area.”

Second, the women argued that opportunities for individual counselling and group support needed to be established on the inside and continued after women were released. According to participants, therapeutic supports can help women deal with the emotional trauma of being apart from their children. As well, group settings would allow women the opportunity to seek support from women going through similar experiences. Third, participants called for programming and workshops that provided women with tools to become more informed and better-skilled parents. Fourth, women wanted supports to be put in place that would help them navigate the child-welfare system, including developing positive relations with child-services workers, and to regain custody of their children upon returning to the

community. When it came to motherhood and children, the more support women had, the better:

“I guess for in here [jail] the thing that should be offered is assistance to help women who want to get their kids back... To prepare them for when they get out, so they don’t fool up and end up back here, to getting their kids back. A lot of help, yeah, we need a lot of things, but the main thing is having people in here to help you work on yourself, to have a life when you do get out, and move on to get your kids back if you don’t have them.”(Jody)

Peers. Peer relationships play an integral role of women’s and men’s lives. Yet, friendships are different for women and men, girls and boys. Research has shown that women and girls are more likely than men and boys are to have a more diverse circle of friends and closer friendships with stronger connections that are more emotionally rewarding (Brabeck & Brabeck, 2006). For women, peer relationships are a source of fulfillment, happiness, strength, and resiliency. However, because of the intrinsic value relationships hold in women’s lives, they can also be a source of anxiety and stress.

Friendships have been shown to be central in the lives of criminalized women. In particular, positive peer relationships can play a crucial role in supporting women as they make the difficult transition back to the community after exiting the correctional system (Leverentz, 2006; O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O’Brien & Lee, 2006; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002). However, criminalized women often find themselves in the predicament of having to disassociate from former peer groups who continue to be involved in criminal activities and/or abuse alcohol and drugs (Leverentz, 2006; O’Brien, 2001a; Pollack, 2008).

In the current study, peer relationships influenced women's reintegration, both positively and negatively. Regardless of how many friends participants had in their lives, or did not have, all of the women spoke of the importance of forming new friendships with others whom they could draw on for support as they re-established themselves in the community. Although some of the women who participated in this study already had friends they could draw on for support upon exiting the provincial correctional system, the majority of women felt compelled to disassociate from their former peer groups. Friends were typically entangled in drugs and/or illegal activity and the women said that in order to make positive changes in their lives they had to end these relationships. Women were proud of themselves for terminating these unhealthy relationships. However, the absence of a peer support network resulted in extreme feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Participants argued that in order to facilitate positive reintegration experiences it was essential that opportunities be created in the community for women to meet new people and develop supportive relationships. Few opportunities existed in the Atlantic Region, especially in smaller rural communities, for women with criminalization histories to engage in activities and build new friendships with other women who were not connected to the friends or former lifestyle women had prior to imprisonment. Furthermore, because of the immediate and competing demands women had to attend to upon re-entry, there was very little time left for them to seek out new friends on their own. The women who participated in this study argued that organized peer-gatherings would help them meet people and perhaps develop positive friendships with other women in the community.

Women with Shared Experiences. Not only are "regular" friendships central in women's lives, but the bonds women form with other women with shared experiences are also

extremely influential. Women value relationships with other women who have experienced similar situations because they give them emotional support, strength, a sense of community, unconditional acceptance, control over their lives, as well as allow them to learn from experiential knowledge. Many women feel a deep connectedness with other women when they have gone through similar experiences because they know firsthand what they are experiencing (Hill, 2001).

Engaging in supportive relationships with others who have shared experiences has helped women deal with a wide array of emotionally-difficult circumstances, many of which are gendered. For example, research has shown that peer support has helped women deal with the stress of balancing a career and family (Lesser, et al., 2004). In addition, relationships among both new and experienced mothers help women adjust to motherhood (Gustave-Boucher, 2009). Relationships with peers “who have been there” have also provided mothers whose children have been sexually abused with a safe and non-judgemental environment to express and deal with powerful emotions that no one else would understand (Hill, 2001). As well, friendships among women with common experiences have provided women with experiential knowledge to help them make decisions about hormone-replacement therapy (Kenen, Shapiro, Friedman, & Coyne, 2007). Peer support has also been instrumental in giving strength and hope to women survivors of breast cancer (Dunn, Campbell, Penn, Dwyer, & Chambers, 2008; Mitchell, Yakiwchuk, Griffin, Gra, & Fitch, 2007). As well, peer support relationships among women who have been victims of violence have helped them through the healing process (Fearday & Cape, 2004).

Research has also shown that the relationships criminalized women form amongst each other on the inside help them to cope with the harsh realities of imprisonment (Bosworth, 1999; Pollack, 2004). For example, relationships among imprisoned mothers have given them strength to deal with the stress and guilt of being separated from their children (Tait, 2008). Friendships between female prisoners has also been shown to decrease feelings of isolation (Pollack, 2004; 1994), increase feelings of self-worth (Pollack, 1994), and facilitate personal healing (Pollack, 2004). Support from women with shared experiences has also been identified in the literature as being a key aspect in women's transition from prison to the community (O'Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Pollack, 2008). These relationships often provide women with the mentorship, support, and encouragement necessary to find the strength to rebuild their lives upon exiting the correctional system (Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002).

In this study, the relationships women formed with each other proved influential during incarceration and upon reintegration. For most of the participants, the main source of comfort and support they received came from other women. Although it was often challenging to develop relationships on the inside, the women reported that they were often able to establish at least one or two friendships with women incarcerated in the same facility, usually their roommate or women designated to the same dayroom. However, these relationships rarely continued after exiting jail, as women were frequently from different communities and release stipulations usually required them to refrain from any contact with individuals who had criminalization histories.

The women who participated in this study longed to have the companionship and mentorship of women who could relate to their own experiences as a means of support as

they navigated the difficult reintegration process. They called for formal (e.g., peer support groups) and informal (e.g., drop in, extracurricular activities, games, and crafts) opportunities in both jail and the community that would allow them to meet and interact with other women who have been criminalized, experienced incarceration, and had gone through the release-process themselves:

“You need people to relate with and to know that you’re not alone. I think it would be good to meet people.” (Layla)

Participants welcomed the opportunity to receive support from and be mentored by women who had been incarcerated as a way to help address personal issues and deal with the challenges they faced in jail and the community:

“I guess if they have a group... where women that’s been in here [jail] or even on the street [can] go and sit down and be able to talk with other women that’s been through the same experiences we’ve been through. Like, it would be a place where, I guess you could open up and just see that it’s not only your life that’s been like that. The other people can identify [with] what you’ve been through. That would be a good support group for any woman that would be getting out of the system or even people on the street. Learning other people’s stories, that actually helps, it helps a lot!”(Jody)

Religious Affiliates. Relationships with God or a Higher Power and the individuals who provide religious and spiritual teachings play an important role in many women’s lives. Research has consistently shown that, overall, women tend to be more religious than men (Francis, 1997). Gender roles may account for this difference. For example, it has been argued that women are socialized to place more emphasis on religion and conformity and

that family-centred roles ascribed to women encourage them to instil religious teaching in their children (Francis, 1997). As well, religion has played a role in alleviating the isolation that more women than men experience as a result of being less likely to work outside the home and to benefit from the social interactions that occur in the workplace (Moberg, 1962).

In the correctional setting, spirituality and religion collectively have been a cornerstone of prison programming and brought solace to many imprisoned women and men (Dammer, 2002; Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). Self-perceived personal support from religious affiliates and activities has been associated with better psychological adjustment to the prison environment and the challenges it presents (Clear & Sumter, 2002; Dammer, 2002; Lacey & Loper, 2009; Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). A study on the influence of religious participation on the adjustment of imprisoned women found that those who engage in religious activities report fewer institutional infractions, aggressive behaviours, as well as experiencing less arguments and physical altercations with fellow prisoners and correctional staff (Lacey & Loper, 2009). In addition, incarcerated women with histories of trauma, violence, and abuse have said that spirituality has “freed” them by giving them “a way to reconstruct and reinterpret their victimization, perpetration of violence, and subsequent incarceration” (Schneider & Feltey, 2009, p. 443).

Research conducted with both female and male prisoner populations has also shown that religion and spirituality in the correctional context can reduce levels of stress (Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006) and depression (Clear & Sumter, 2002; Lacey & Loper, 2009). Participation in religious activities also works to increase feelings of self-esteem and efficacy (Clear & Sumter, 2002; Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006), helps prisoners feel better about themselves

(Dammer, 2002), and gives them hope and a “peace of mind” (Dammer, 2002). As well, religion provides imprisoned women and men with a sense of control over their lives and the foundation to make positive changes both in themselves and their environments (Barringer, 1998; Dammer, 2002).

Little research has been conducted, however, on the potential benefits of religious programs and spiritual uptake on reintegration (Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). This study demonstrated that religion and spirituality, as well as the relationships participants formed with religious affiliates, played an important role in women’s lives, especially as they made the difficult transition back to the community. Many of the women who participated in this research reported that faith-based programming (e.g., church services and informal counselling) offered by religious affiliates was the only type of support they received inside provincial jails across the Atlantic Region. The teaching and unconditional support participants received from these individuals provided them with the foundation to make positive changes in their lives, as well as gave them a positive outlook on life and an increased sense of hope.

Based on the personal accounts of the women who participated in this study, it appears that the majority of religious support within the provincial correctional system in Atlantic Canada is Christian-based. Despite the fact that a number of the women I interviewed were Aboriginal, there was no discussion about Aboriginal spiritual supports at the correctional facilities. However, participants said that the individuals who came in to speak with them were supportive of different faiths and often spoke about spirituality in the broad sense as opposed to specific religious teachings. Given the influential role of religion and

relationships with religious affiliates, participants recommended that faith-based services continue to be offered and expanded upon within the provincial correctional system.

Counsellors/Therapists. The relationships women form with their counsellors and therapists can be instrumental in helping them articulate, deal with, and heal from hardships they have faced in their lives. Women seek therapeutic support for a variety of reasons, including difficulties within intimate relationships, histories of violence, substance abuse, medical concerns and reproductive issues, and poor mental health. Research suggests that gender difference exist in help-seeking behaviour, with more women than men using mental health-related therapeutic supports (Gove, 1984).

Therapeutic supports, especially mental health services, have long been a core component of correctional programming (at least in theory) and have been the centre of much controversy, especially in relation to female prisoners. In the correctional setting, women have been constructed as being “disorderly and disordered and thus in need of *taming*” (Pollack & Kendall, 2005, p. 72). As such, instead of empowering women, therapeutic practices in jails/prisons have served to regulate women’s emotions and behaviours. While the presence or absence of therapeutic correctional programming has been linked to women’s reintegration, the relationships women form with individuals who counsel them has yet to be included in frameworks as being an important element to consider as women make the difficult transition from incarceration to the community.

Interpersonal relationships with individuals who provided one-on-one counselling (e.g., professional counsellors, clinical therapists, psychologists, mental health workers, outreach workers, and religious affiliates) were seen by the women who participated in this study as being influential in their reintegration. Specifically, the women said that the emotional

support these individuals provided helped them begin to deal with the underlying issues that led to their criminalization and the challenges they came up against when they returned to the community. The problem, however, was that participants said they rarely had the opportunity to engage in one-on-one support and establish connections with counsellors/therapists. Across the Atlantic Region, few therapeutic supports were offered in provincial correctional facilities or the community.

Over and over again, women called for greater access to counsellors/therapists both in the provincial correctional system and in the community to address the underlying issues that contributed to their criminalization and continued to present challenges upon re-entry. Participants wanted one-on-one support to help them deal with the emotional trauma associated with fractured relationships with family and being separated from their children. Additionally, they wanted professional support to address their addictions and mental health issues.

Correctional Personnel. There is no denying that correctional personnel impact the experiences of incarcerated women and men, as they are the ones who interact with the jail/prison population on a daily basis, enforcing correctional policies, practices, and procedures. Although women and men may share certain similar experiences with correctional staff, such as power differentials between guards and prisoners, there are key gender differences. The most prominent issue for imprisoned women is that the majority of correctional personnel is male. In 2001, women only represented 29% of all correctional services workers in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006b). The presence of male administrators and guards in facilities that house women has long been controversial, because the vast majority of imprisoned women have experienced violence and abuse at the hands of men

(Boritch, 1997). Questions have been raised as to the appropriateness of having male guards in positions of power and authority over women with victimization histories (Boritch, 1997). The prison environment, including the presence of male correctional administrators and service workers, recreates power imbalances, as well as the “sense of insecurity, degradation and fear that are inherent in most abusive relationships” (Pollack, 1994, p. 38).

The impact of relationships, whether positive or negative, between correctional staff and female prisoners has been noticeably absent in the reintegration literature, particularly in frameworks for understanding and addressing women’s transition. In this study, the interactions women had with correctional personnel not only influenced their incarceration experiences, but their reintegration as well. For the most part, participants characterized relationships with correctional staff as being negative and emotionally harmful. Guards exerted power and exercised high levels of control over women during their period of incarceration. The women developed resentment and distrust for correctional personnel who held positions of power, as they felt that staff repeatedly broke confidentiality, employed excessive disciplinary practices, restricted access to the outdoor “yard,” and enforced unfair practices that disconnected women from their loved ones. Furthermore, they said that correctional staff provided women little support, often looked down upon them, and frequently made degrading and snide remarks as they exited the system. Participants reported that the damaging labels and hurtful comments made by staff were internalized, which decreased their self-esteem, personal confidence, and belief that they could “make it” upon returning to the community.

The women who participated in this study argued that the practices of correctional guards towards women set them up for failure before even leaving the jail and made it challenging for women to enter the community with a positive outlook. Participants wanted to see staff with a variety of demographic backgrounds and social locations hired. They also suggested that mandatory sensitivity training be implemented for correctional staff in jails across the Atlantic Region to educate them about women's experiences, as well as issues related to sexism, racism, and sexual orientation. The women who participated in this study also recommended that staff attitudes and practices be oriented towards helping and supporting women rather than punishment and control.

Probation/Parole Officers. The relationships criminalized populations form and maintain with their probation or parole officers can be extremely influential. Women are more likely than men are to interact with probation and parole officers because they receive more probation sentences, typically because they commit less serious crimes (Statistics Canada, 2006b). In 2003-2004, 40% of women who were found guilty of an offense received probation as their most serious sentence as compared to only 29% of men (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

It has been argued that traditional probation and parole philosophies and practices have ignored the complexities of the routes that led to women's criminalization, including family and poverty (Worrall, 1989). Probation officers often view women as being difficult to work with: missing or refusing appointments, not disclosing pertinent information, lacking commitment to change their behaviours or attitudes, indecisive and poor self-identity, unable to cope or problem-solve in crises, stubborn and devious, as well as manipulative

(Worrall, 1989). Ironically, Worrall argues, these same characteristics have become increasingly acceptable among male (ex-) prisoners.

In the present study, relationships with probation/parole officers influenced women's post-jail experiences, supporting the literature (see Pollack, 2008). Participants acknowledged that probation/parole officers could provide women with an abundance of support as they navigated the difficult transition process. However, the women who participated in this study said that they were rarely a source of support for women. The women argued that high caseloads among a small number of probation/parole officers in the Atlantic Region meant that they did not have enough time to devote to supporting women and addressing their individual needs.

Participants felt disillusioned by the promise of probation/parole officers connecting them to community-based supports, treatment, and programming that could have been instrumental in promoting "successful" reintegration. They suggested that case loads be decreased and more time devoted to helping women connect with essential services. The women reported that probation/parole officers are often the only support they have on the outside and that program models need to take these relationships into consideration in order to better support women in their transition from incarceration to the community.

This study highlights the importance of affirmative relationships in the lives of women entangled within the provincial correctional system in Atlantic Canada and the central role they play in addressing the needs of criminalized women. The Stone Centre group has argued that mutually empathetic relationships, that is, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, are important in the growth and development of women, and in promoting change (Miller, 1982, 1986, 2008a, 2008b; Surrey, 1984). However, the

majority of relationships in participants' lives lacked mutual empathy. In fact, there were few people willing to open themselves to understanding and sharing their experiences.

Traditional policies and practices in the correctional system that support punishment rather than rehabilitative strategies that promote connection increase separation and disconnection among incarcerated women (Duff, Garcia-Coll, Miller, & Potter, 1995; Jenkins, 2004). Substantial power-differences that exist between criminalized women and others whom they interact with, especially correctional personnel, make it difficult to form growth-fostering relationships. However, Jenkins (2004) found, through the Women-in-Prison Project, which was premised on the Stone Centre's relational-cultural theory, that mutually-empowering relationships were both necessary and possible to achieve with incarcerated women by creating a power-with approach to relationships that honours the strengths of women and, in turn, increases connection and well-being. Incorporating policies and practices that support power-sharing and the restoration and creation of mutually empathetic relationships in the provincial correctional system and the community would enhance women's lives, as well as correctional staff and others who support criminalized women, including family, peers, religious affiliates, therapists, and probation and parole officers.

Environmental

In the ecological model, environmental settings are situated between the relational and societal systems. These mediating settings are typically referred to as mesosystems and they include such environments as neighbourhood groups, religious organizations, educational institutions, etc. Therefore, I have framed women's reintegration experiences within the context of environmental influences or "community supports." Environmental

systems have been well documented in the literature as being both facilitators and inhibitors of “successful” reintegration (Maidment, 2006a; O’Brien, 2001a, 2001b; Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002; Pollack, 2008; Richie, 2001). Community supports were also central in the lives of the women who participated in this study and played a large role in their reintegration. From their standpoint, there were ten, key environmental factors that influenced women’s transition. They included housing, social service agencies, education and vocational training, employment, addictions services, mental health services, healthcare, community organizations, feminist-oriented agencies, and the correctional system.

Housing. Safe, stable, and affordable housing should be a basic human right. However, thousands of people in Canada are without adequate housing. In comparison to men, high rates of housing need exist among women, largely because they make up a significant proportion of those living on low incomes (Haworth-Brockman & Donner, 2009). The rising costs of housing are forcing women to spend money normally allocated for other basic necessities, such as food, clothing, and housing are making them more vulnerable to unsafe housing situations and more susceptible to homelessness (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2004). In particular, women who are racialized, lone-parents, senior, young, or living with a disability are at a higher risk of living in precarious housing situations (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2004; Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CMHC, 2005).

In comparison to other regions in the country, housing needs are high in the Atlantic provinces, particularly in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador (CMHC, 2005). High rates of poverty and housing need among women in Atlantic Canada have left many

living in unsafe and unhealthy environments. For example, a recent study examining housing need in rural Atlantic communities found that a lack of housing options has forced many women living in these areas to move into the city to find more affordable housing options and supports (Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, AHANS, 2007). Many rural women are also entering into the sex trade or engaging in other illegal activities in order to maintain their current housing (AHANS, 2007). In addition, more and more women in Atlantic Canada are living on the streets. A recent estimate of the number of homeless people in the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia showed that the proportion of young homeless women aged 16-24 was nearly double that of young men, at 41% and 21% respectively (Community Action on Homelessness, 2009). Additionally, it is estimated that a large number of women in the region are among the “hidden homeless,” living in temporary situations and enduring unhealthy environments in order to have shelter (Community Action on Homelessness, 2009).

Women coming out of jail/prison are arguably among the most vulnerable in terms of housing-need and homelessness given their experiences of poverty are exacerbated while incarcerated. As this study demonstrates, many provincially sentenced women are living in poverty before they enter the correctional system. Moreover because there is no paid work in Atlantic jails or supports in place to connect women with services, they typically leave the system without sufficient income to obtain housing. Few options exist to provide these women with housing options upon re-entry. For example, there was only one women-only halfway house in Atlantic Canada at the time of the study. Furthermore, few residential treatment centre, shelters, and transition houses exist in the four provinces.

Similar to findings from previous reintegration studies (see Eaton, 1993; Evans, 2006; Maidment, 2006a; O'Brien, 2001a, 2001b; O'Brien & Harm, 2002; Richie, 2001; Shaw, 1994a, Smith & Parriag, 2005; Vir Tyagi, 2004), one of the most pressing needs among the women who participated in this project was finding adequate and affordable housing. Participants said that women who secured a safe, permanent place to reside upon exiting the provincial correctional system were more likely to have positive reintegration experiences than those who were forced into short-term living arrangements. Unfortunately, the majority of the women who participated in this study did not have a place to go upon their release. Most were forced to find temporary shelter that often threatened their personal safety, sobriety, new lifestyle choices, and ultimately their ability to “successfully” reintegrate into the community.

The women desperately wanted assistance in finding and securing housing prior to their release. They suggested that an individual in various communities be appointed the role of “housing coordinator” to help connect women with various residential options (e.g., affordable housing, community-based treatment facilities, supported living environments, shelters, etc). Furthermore, they called for more affordable housing option to be created in safe and vibrant communities across the Atlantic Region. Participants also recommended that multi-staged housing alternatives run by feminist-oriented agencies, such as the Elizabeth Fry Society, be established in communities so that women would have a safe place to stay for as long as they needed. For example, Charlene said:

“I think they should have a home for women when they come out of jail that they can go there for whatever period of time is necessary depending on the person.”

The women argued that without housing, women had very little hope in succeeding and that any program model designed to help women as they transitioned must include shelter.

Social Service Agencies. Income, or a lack of, is directly related to the need to receive financial support through government-provided social-assistance programs. Women comprise a disproportionate share of the population with low incomes and, as such, are twice as likely as men are to rely on government transfer payments for their main source of income, including financial aid, social security, and government subsidies (Statistics Canada, 2006b). The majority of women receiving support are single mothers.

In the Atlantic Region, welfare incomes are the lowest in the country, not even reaching half that of the poverty line (National Council of Welfare, 2006). Across the Atlantic provinces, women are far more likely than men to be receiving social assistance (Nova Scotia Community Counts, 2009) – contributing greatly to the perpetuation of poverty among women in this region.

Almost all of the women (90%) who participated in this study received some form of social assistance prior to their jail term with most citing it as their primary source of income. The women reported that there was nothing available within the provincial correctional system to help them change their economic status. As a result, most of the women exited jail with little or no financial resources and had to rely once again on social assistance upon returning to the community. The application process for income support could not be started on the inside, which meant that women had to wait up to several days or even weeks before they received their first social-assistance cheques. The lag in payments impacted women's post-jail lives immensely, because they did not have the financial resources to acquire such basic necessities as housing, food, or clothing.

Interactions with social service agencies were often complex and played a crucial role in women's transition experiences. Participants said it was important that women received assistance filling out and filing applications. Specifically, the women who participated in this study suggested that a satellite, social-service office be established across the region within community-based organizations that support criminalized women. Staff representatives from the satellite offices could then meet one-on-one with women in jail prior to their release to help them with the application process as a way to ensure that they would receive a cheque immediately upon exiting jail/prison.

Education and Vocational Training. Educational attainment and literacy levels have escalated for both women and men over the years. However, in general, women are better educated than are men. More women complete high school and graduate from community college (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Women are also more likely than men are to attend university, but less likely to graduate despite a substantial increase over the past 30 years in the number of women who hold a university degree. For example, in 1971, only 3% of women had a university degree. By 1991, the percentage had climbed to 10% and in 2001 that number had risen to 15% (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

Many of the above trends hold true in the Atlantic Region. In all four of the provinces, more women than men have a high school diploma or equivalency (Nova Scotia Community Counts, 2009). With the exception of Newfoundland and Labrador more women graduate from community college (Nova Scotia Community Counts, 2009). In contrast to national statistics, however, more women than men in Atlantic Canada possess a university degree (Nova Scotia Community Counts, 2009). Despite the fact that, in general, women are more highly educated than men are in the region, they have the highest

unemployment rates in the country. Statistics do show, however, that regardless of the level of education women have attained, they are less likely than men are to be employed – regardless of where they live (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

Criminalized women typically have lower levels of educational attainment than the general population (Boritch, 1997). The reality for most women in jail/prison is that their position of social, economic, and political marginalization presents little opportunity for them to receive an education. Even if they do have a higher education, like many of the women who participated in this study, most do not have the skills required to secure well-paid, stable employment. The women who participated in this study said that finding employment was a major stressor in their lives and desperately wanted opportunities to develop new skills and increase their knowledge in order to enhance their chances of finding meaningful employment upon release. However, few educational or vocational training programs existed within the provincial correctional system or community to help women develop work-related skills. This study showed that education beyond a high school diploma or its equivalency was not accessible to women in the provincial system.

The women who participated in this study wanted to see increased education and vocational training both in jail and in the community made available to help them gain the practical skills and knowledge-base to secure adequate employment. They believed that the provincial correctional system needed to provide educational upgrading and advancement beyond a general educational development (GED) diploma – or high school equivalency. Participants argued that gaining access to educational settings would open up new opportunities for women plagued by economic hardship and social exclusion.

Employment. When looking at employment through a gendered lens, clear differences exist. Despite the fact that more and more women have entered the paid workforce in recent years, they continue to comprise the largest proportion of unpaid workers (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Furthermore, while men are typically employed full-time, women hold the majority of temporary and part-time low-waged positions and are more likely to be multiple job holders (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Regardless of the type of job, women continue to earn substantially lower incomes than men do – pushing women further to the margins. On average, women earn 62% of male incomes (Statistics Canada, 2006b). In addition, when looking at various family compositions, women raising children on their own have the lowest incomes in the country, making 38% less than two-parent families and 60% less than lone-parent families headed by men (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

Women in the Atlantic Region have the highest unemployment rates in Canada (Cameron, 2003) and the lowest incomes among men *and* women in all other provinces – making them one of the most economically marginalized groups in the country (Cameron, 2003; Statistics Canada, 2006b). In 2003, the average income of women in Ontario, the highest earners among all women, was \$26,100 (Statistics Canada, 2006b). In contrast, women in Nova Scotia earned, on average, \$21,500, \$20,700 in New Brunswick, \$20,300 in Prince Edward Island, and \$19,000 in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

A large proportion of criminalized women are not in the paid workforce prior to, during, or upon exiting the correctional system. When they are in the paid workforce, these women often find themselves in precarious employment situations – working in temporary, seasonal, and part-time low-waged jobs. The majority of the women who participated in

this study reported low incomes and high unemployment-rates. Those women who were employed were working in traditional low-waged female-oriented occupations.

Employment was found to be a major stressor in women's lives and a crucial factor that impacted incarceration and reintegration. Few employment programs exist in Atlantic Canada to help women gain stable employment in the labour market, especially within the provincial correctional context.

The women who participated in this study argued that full-time, well-paying employment was vital for long-term reintegration. Employment provided women with the monetary resources to be independent and to financially support themselves, as well as their children if they were mothers. Additionally, occupational settings gave women the opportunity to engage with others. Paid employment also allowed women to be contributing members of society, which promoted feelings of self-worth and a sense of community. However, most women who participated in this project were not working at the time of their arrest, did not have paid jobs within the provincial jails, and experienced numerous barriers to employment upon returning to the community after incarceration.

The women who participated in this study wanted increased access to employment opportunities both in jail and in the community to help them gain the practical skills and knowledge-base to secure adequate employment:

“I would like to see something where women could go and help prepare to get back into the workforce...” (Kelly)

They suggested the creation of a special employment services program hosted by feminist-oriented community agencies across the region that would offer women training and job placements. The women wanted to see an onsite employment coach or counsellor hired to

help connect women with other educational, employment, and vocational programs in the community, as well as employers willing to hire women with criminal records. They argued that this individual could also provide such services as resume-writing, mock interviewing, and assistance with disclosing information to potential employers (e.g., gaps in resumes, criminal records, etc.). As well, many participants suggested that a clothing program be established as part of this employment services program to provide women with business attire, as most women who are looking for work immediately upon release do not have appropriate clothing or the financial resources to buy new garments.

Addiction Services. It is important to apply a gendered lens in order to highlight some of the differences that exist between women and men when it comes to alcohol and substance use, misuse, addiction, and treatment. In general, men have higher rates of alcohol and illicit-drug use, but more women than men report using pharmaceutical drugs, such as pain relievers, sedatives, and stimulants (Health Canada, 2008). However, in recent years, the gender gap in the prevalence of alcohol and substance-use and related disorders has narrowed, especially among adolescents and in particular among young females (Ziberman, Tavares, Blume, & El-Guebaly, 2003). Yet, gender differences still exist. For instance, women have a faster progression to dependence than men do, are more vulnerable to the physiological effects of alcohol and substance abuse, and experience higher rates of psychiatric comorbidity (Ziberman, Tavares, Blume, & El-Guebaly, 2003). In addition, female drug users experience higher levels of victimization than males (Simpson & McNulty, 2007) and are more likely than men are to self-medicate as a response to their histories of violence, trauma, and abuse (Arnold, 1990; McClellan, Farabee, & Crouch, 1997; Owen & Bloom, 1995; Pollock, 2002).

The prevalence of “drug and alcohol abuse/dependence is extraordinarily elevated in incarcerated women versus their female community counterparts” (Lewis, 2006, p. 777). Furthermore, although women in the community have lower rates of alcohol and drug dependency, the reverse is true within the correctional population. In fact, previous studies have shown that criminalized women are more often and more extensively involved in drugs than men (Decker, 1992; Greenfeld & Snell, 1999; Kassebaum & Chandler, 1994; Staton, Leukefeld, & Webster, 2003). As well, women are more likely than men are to commit crimes related to their drug use and be under the influence at the time of their offence (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999; Mumola, 1999).

Women are often under-represented in addiction treatment programs. One reason for fewer women seeking support for their alcohol and/or drug use is that the majority of addiction services are based on either neutral or male-centric modalities that fail to meet the specific experiences and complex needs of women (Greaves & Poole, 2008). Gender-responsive approaches to alcohol and drug treatment are needed to effectively meet women’s needs and validate their experiences (Greaves & Poole, 2008). In the Atlantic Region, few treatment facilities exist to address women’s addiction. There are only 15 community-based residential facilities throughout the four provinces that accept female patients and only six of those were designed specifically for women. Furthermore, only a handful of communities in the region have methadone programs. The women who participated in this study said it was incredibly difficult to get into treatment programs. Furthermore, openings for women entangled within the correctional system were typically offered first to women in the federal system.

The women who participated in this study said that addiction was one of the biggest struggles they faced upon release. They argued that “successful” reintegration was largely dependent on receiving treatment and support for alcohol and/or drug addiction and being connected to addiction services prior to their release. However, as this study demonstrated, few of the participants received addiction support, inside or out. Across the region, upon entering the provincial correctional system, women were forced into detox “cold turkey” without adequate medical attention. Upon sobriety, there were few services in place on the inside to help women address their addictions and the underlying issues that led to their alcohol and/or substance abuse. If they did exist, they were offered infrequently and sporadically. Most of the women were released without being connected to community-based addiction supports, primarily because few services exist in Atlantic communities to address the needs of women with addictions. The women who participated in this study argued that the absence of gender-specific supports and the inaccessibility of addiction services both in jail and in the community have been detrimental for women, putting them at greater risk of further criminalization.

On the inside, women wanted gender-specific addiction programming, treatment, and therapeutic supports implemented. In particular, participants said that women needed greater access to AA and NA programs while incarcerated, especially meetings specifically for women. They also wanted to see one-on-one counselling and peer support groups established to help them address their addiction issues. Furthermore, participants insisted that methadone be made available to *all* women in provincial jails with opioid addictions and not only those who started their treatment prior to incarceration. In fact, methadone was seen as being a key factor in women’s recovery and had a tremendous impact on their lives:

“The methadone has been something for me that, if I hadn’t of had methadone, I don’t know where I’d be today. I might not even be here! The methadone has definitely given me a second chance in life... the opiate addiction I had, had taken such control of my life. It had taken control of every angle and turning me into somebody that I wasn’t.” (Ellen)

Participants reported that increased access to methadone maintenance programs in the community also was needed, as well as women-only community-based residential treatment facilities that specifically addressed the underlying issues of women’s addictions (e.g., histories of trauma and abuse, poor mental health, and separation from children). At the very least, the women who participated in this study said it should be mandatory for women to be connected to addictions services as part of their release plan so that they could immediately access support when they returned to the community. However, women thought the ultimate goal should be to allow women to partake in community-based treatment options and therapeutic programs while carrying out their jail terms so that they could start to address their addiction issues before they returned to the community.

Mental Health Services. While no one is immune to experiencing mental health issues, women receive more diagnoses than men do and have higher hospitalization rates for mental illness (Statistics Canada, 2006b). There are clear gender differences in the types of mental health disorders for which women and men are admitted into care. Women comprise the majority of admissions for depression, bi-polar, anxiety, and personality disorders, whereas more men than women are hospitalized for schizophrenia and alcohol/drug dependencies (Statistics Canada, 2006b). It is not known whether women in Atlantic Canada experience mental illness differently than women in other parts of the country.

However, a recent study examining mental illness among women in Nova Scotia found that an increasing number of women are struggling to live with mental health issues (Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, 2005). Staff from community organizations reported that almost half of all their female clients in the Halifax Regional Municipality and upwards to 90% of their rural female clients had some form of mental illness – with depression being the most common.

Experiences of abuse, especially sexual abuse, among women and girls is one contributing factor that leads to increased rates of mental illness among the female population (Ad Hoc Working Group on Women, Mental Health, Mental Illness and Addiction, 2009; Statistics Canada, 2006b). For women, histories of violence are commonly associated with depression, anxiety, as well as post-traumatic stress, personality, dissociative identity, and eating disorders. In comparison, alcohol use and misuse are often linked to histories of child maltreatment among men. Many women who have mental health issues and are survivors of violence, trauma, and abuse also have high rates of alcohol and substance use – often to cope with their histories of victimization.

Women in prison have considerably higher rates of mental illness than the general female population (Laishes, 2002). Furthermore, when gender is examined, imprisoned women are more likely than men are to have both more frequent and more serious mental health issues (Harlow, 1999). Women in prison consistently outnumber men in all major psychiatric diagnoses except for anti-social personality disorder (Laishes, 2002). Incarcerated women are more likely than their male counterparts are to have coexisting mental health and substance abuse problems (Hartwell, 2001; Henderson, Schaeffer, & Brown, 1998; Morash, Bynum, & Koons, 1998; Singer et al., 1995). Similar to women in

the community, mental health issues among imprisoned women frequently arise as an outcome of previous experiences of poverty, physical and sexual abuse, assault, as well as substance abuse (Blanchette & Motiuk, 1996; Laishes, 2002). While more women with mental health issues are being increasingly criminalized, their needs are being grossly overlooked by the correctional system (Neve & Pate, 2005).

Mental health services influenced the incarceration and transition experiences of the women who participated in this study. These services were seen as being pivotal as they made the difficult transition from jail to the community. Unfortunately, correctional staff were not equipped to deal with women suffering from mental illness and mental health programming was virtually non-existent in provincial jails across the region. Furthermore, few mental health services and treatment facilities exist in the Atlantic Region to provide women the support they need. Where mental health programs did exist, they were predominantly for male clientele with only a few spots available to women. Waiting lists were often long and fees were high. As a result, the women in this study rarely received the therapeutic treatment they required to address their mental health needs.

Participants recommended that specialized, mental health services for women be offered to provincially sentenced women in the Atlantic Region to help them attend to underlying issues that led to their criminalization. Otherwise these issues would continue to present challenges for women when they returned to the community. Specifically, the women wanted increased access to professional one-on-one counselling and peer support groups on the inside and in the community to help them deal with the issues that contributed to their poor mental health. Furthermore, participants wanted correctional staff to receive

mandatory training to better support women with mental health needs and to be more compassionate towards them.

Healthcare. When it comes to health and well-being, the majority of women believe that they are generally in good health. Despite these positive reports, however, many women suffer from poor emotional, mental, and/or physical health, especially in comparison to men. For instance, women are much more likely than men are to live with a disability, receive a diagnosis for sexually transmitted infections, and suffer from chronic health conditions (Statistics Canada, 2006b). In the Atlantic Region, women experience some of the highest rates of chronic health conditions in the entire country – in comparison to *both* women and men. For example, in all four Atlantic provinces, women are more likely than men, as well as women in other parts of the country, to be overweight or obese, as well as have such ailments as arthritis, diabetes, and high blood pressure (Statistics Canada, 2009). In addition, women living in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have the highest rates of asthma than anyone else in the country (Statistics Canada, 2009).

The health status of women is affected by a host of social, cultural, political, and environmental determinants that are attributable to both sex and gender (Hankivsky, 2000). For example, women's gendered roles as "care providers" and "health gatekeepers" of their family's health and their own often renders them responsible for seeking healthcare information, making the bulk of decisions about health issues, consulting healthcare providers, purchasing health and medical products, and providing care (Hankivsky, 2000; Mastin, Andsager, Choi, & Lee, 2007; Mintzes, 2009). Also, women use the healthcare system and visit physicians more frequently than men because of biological differences, such as reproductive functions related to menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause

(Hankivsky, 2000). As well, one of the strongest indicators of poor health is poverty and women comprise the largest proportion of individuals living below the poverty line (Doyal, 1995).

Criminalized women often have poor health, largely because of their socio-economic position of marginalization. In comparison to both women in general and male prisoners, women in jail/prison suffer more frequent and serious disease, illness, and injuries (Maruschak & Beck, 1997). Furthermore, imprisoned women have unique medical needs related to their reproductive system (e.g., gynaecological disease, HIV, Hepatitis, and pregnancy) (Acoca, 1998). Despite the fact that imprisoned women require and utilize more healthcare services (Lindquist & Lindquist, 1999; Young, 1998), women receive fewer and less adequate medical and mental health services than men are offered, even within the same correctional facilities (Acoca, 1998; Marquart et al., 1997).

The women in this study argued that women who had their healthcare needs met were more likely to be “successful” upon release. However, the study found that there was a general lack and poor quality of healthcare services within the provincial jails in the Atlantic Region. The women experienced great difficulty in getting access to medical professionals and treatment on this inside. Furthermore, participants said that correctional staff showed little respect towards their medical concerns. Women often went untreated for their health problems and returned to the community with multiple physical health needs. Once in the community, women faced numerous challenges in accessing healthcare services. It was nearly impossible to find a family physician in many Atlantic communities. In addition, waiting times were often lengthy for specialized healthcare services. Furthermore, women’s economic situations meant that they often could not afford service

fees or costs of treatments and medications, which were often free of charge in jail.

Prescriptions were not provided for women upon release. As a result, women often turned to the streets to obtain their prescriptions or other medications to help with pain management, which put them at risk of further criminalization.

The women who participated in this study were highly critical of onsite medical care in provincial jails and wanted women's healthcare needs addressed. They asked that their health complaints to be taken seriously by correctional staff and for adequate treatment to be provided. Participants argued that medical staff needed to be onsite more than once a week so that women did not have to wait to see physicians. The women also said that correctional guards should not be allowed in the examination room as it prevents many women from seeking treatment. Participants also recommended that women in provincial jails have access to healthcare professionals in the community and that these services continue to be made available to women after incarceration. As well, the women suggested that subsidies be given for prescriptions, as most women could not afford private healthcare plans.

Community-Based Organizations. Organizations play a pivotal role in supporting community members. In fact, many community agencies, especially non-profit organizations, have taken on increased responsibility in recent years for providing social supports and societal resources that were once supplied by the state, but have now been eroded under the current socio-political context (Ross, 2009). In the neo-liberal climate, individuals have had to find solutions to the dissolving welfare state and have turned to community organizations to play a primary role. On the positive side, this shift in responsibility has resulted in communities having more power over their own well-being

and the ability to provide services “in a manner that respects the dignity and humanity of marginalized populations, upholding their right to participate in the decisions that affect them with mutuality and equality” (Ross, 2009, p. 65). On the negative side, communities are only able to actualize their service delivery goals and provide such supports when sufficient resources exist. Consequently, marginalized communities, including many throughout the Atlantic Region, struggle to provide necessary supports.

Given that social welfare is largely contingent upon available resources, the provision of these services becomes increasingly dependent on those in power (Ross, 2009). In turn, those who have power and control the distribution of resources deem what the needs are of the community, perpetuating gender, class, race, and other oppressive societal structures that differentiate people’s access to social welfare. Therefore, there is a risk of further deepening unequal access to welfare among those who are already marginalized, including women. As depicted throughout this framework, women comprise the majority of marginalized populations and do not have the same access to resources as men do, including housing, income, education, employment, health services, and so on. Few community organizations exist that address the specific needs and experiences of women. When they are available, these organizations can be instrumental in women’s lives.

Few services exist to support criminalized women. The majority of programming, services, and support that were available in provincial jails and communities across the Atlantic Region were provided by community organizations. There was no question that the presence or absence of community-based supports was by far one of the most important factors that either promoted or inhibited positive reintegration experiences among the women who participated in this study. The women argued that the more community-based

support women could access in jail and in the community, the more likely they were to be “successful” upon release. However, the amount of support women received from community groups was largely contingent upon the geographic location of the jail in which they were incarcerated and the availability of such services in the community.

Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, many regions in Atlantic Canada simply did not have organizations in their communities to support women, or the broader community for that matter.

These organizations were often the only link women had with the community. Still many of the women who participated in this study said that they were not familiar with supports that were available in the communities to which they returned to upon release:

“I don’t know what options or services are out there...” (Sally)

Sometimes this lack of awareness was because the services simply did not exist and other times it was because organizations were not visible to the women.

Participants suggested that community-based supports be advertised within the provincial correctional system. As well, the women asked for increased visibility of these supports within the community itself. In addition, participants recommended that those individuals from community agencies who currently provide support to women on the inside could take on the role of connecting incarcerated women with available services, programming, and treatment in the community. The women also recommended that the provincial correctional system allow more community supports to be brought into the jails to help women address their various needs. As well, participants called for women in provincial jails to be allowed to access community-based supports *in the community* while

they were incarcerated as a means of addressing underlying issues related to their criminalization and to increase their chances of “successful” reintegration upon release.

Feminist-Oriented Agencies. Feminist-oriented agencies were created to address the inequalities and inequities women experience in obtaining adequate services to meet their needs (Hardina, Middleton, Montana, & Simpson, 2007; Hyde, 1994). These types of organizations often engage in advocacy for the rights of women, consciousness-raising about the issues women face in a patriarchal society, as well as provide non-traditional services to clients, primarily comprised of women (Hyde, 1989). Core principles of feminist-oriented agencies include empowerment, relationship-building, power-sharing, collective decision-making, equality among all participants of the organization, increasing the status of all women, and social action (Hardina, Middleton, Montana, & Simpson, 2007).

Feminist-oriented agencies, such as sexual assault centres, transition houses and shelters, women’s health centres, and working-women’s centres, have been instrumental in the lives of women. Few of these services exist, however, in Atlantic Canada. For example, there are only a handful of shelters and transitions houses in each of the four Atlantic provinces (for a complete listing see National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 2008). Where feminist-oriented agencies do exist, they tend to be centralized around the larger metropolitan areas, leaving the vast majority of rural and coastal communities’ women without services.

In regards to issues related to the law, feminist-based organizations, such as the Elizabeth Fry Society, were established to address the inequities women were experiencing within the criminal justice system. The first Elizabeth Fry Society in Canada opened in Vancouver in 1939, followed a decade later by the chapter in Kingston (Avis, 2002). There

are now approximately 25 Elizabeth Fry Societies throughout the country providing various services to women who have been or are at risk of becoming criminalized. There are five chapters in Atlantic Canada. However, the Elizabeth Fry Society of Newfoundland and Labrador does not provide direct services to women because they have not received needed financial support from the government. Despite the best efforts of the Elizabeth Fry Societies in the Atlantic Region, the geographic expansiveness of the region makes it next to impossible for existing regional chapters to provide services to the majority of women in Atlantic Canada who are in need of their support.

For those women who participated in this study who had access to feminist-oriented agencies, they were seen by participants as being an environmental influence that promoted “successful” reintegration. In fact, many of the women perceived women-centred organizations, such as Coverdale and Elizabeth Fry Societies, as being at the foundation of their long-term “success.” The women who participated in this study reported that the bulk of support women received on the inside and in the community was provided by feminist-oriented agencies. Without these supports the women said they would have had nothing and in many cases this was true. Participants in various regions of the Atlantic provinces said that supports like Coverdale and EFry did not exist. Women who were jailed and/or living in these communities were often left to face the difficult transition process on their own.

The women who had feminist-oriented agencies available to them valued the support they provided. Participants who were able to receive such support, as well as those who did not, called for more agencies like EFry to be established throughout the region. Furthermore, despite providing the bulk of services, the women wanted more support than what the agencies could offer. However, participants recognized that these organizations

were limited by financial and staff resources. As such, the women who participated in this study called for additional resources to be allocated by the government and private sectors to these organizations in order for them to be able to respond to the multiple needs of criminalized women both on the inside and in the community.

Correctional System. The correctional system itself is an extremely influential environmental setting that impacts the experiences of those who become entangled within it. Women's "involvement" in crime is relatively low in comparison to men (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Consequently, the small number of women under federal and provincial custody has meant that women tend to be ignored by the system (Boritch, 1997). The conditions of jail/prison life have a profound influence on women's experiences both on the inside and out.

While regional female correctional facilities have been built across the country for women in the federal system, the same is not true for women under provincial supervision. In the Atlantic Region, where there are too few women to justify building separate facilities, provincially sentenced women are housed in jails designed for men, except in Newfoundland and Labrador where the only women's provincial jail exists in the East Coast. While these jails are typically referred to as being "co-ed," they were never intended to hold both men and women (Boritch, 1997). As a result, women are often incarcerated in overcrowded facilities, "in whatever space is available and convenient to the dominant male inmate population" (Boritch, 1997, p. 191) with few services available. For example, the women in this study who were incarcerated in the provincial correctional facility in Prince Edward Island reported that women were confined to the library due to a lack of space.

Since the inception of the prison system, criminalized women have been measured against men. A male-model of corrections in the Canadian criminal justice system, as in other countries, has resulted in pervasive gender-inequalities. For one, male-centric philosophies, procedures, and practices dominate the correctional system. Second, as just mentioned, women are predominantly held in male correctional facilities. Third, the majority of correctional administrators and guards are men, the majority of whom apparently are not aware of the distinct needs and experiences of women, including poverty, motherhood, victimization histories, and so on. Fourth, while male-dominated correctional facilities offer abundant programming for men, women do not have access to the number and range of programming (Boritch, 1997). Typically, programs for women are seen as being “supplementary to those of men rather than as fundamentally different” and subsequently fail to address the diverse needs of the female jail/prison population (Boritch, 1997, p. 198). Finally, although I have not exhausted all examples, women are being subjected to gender-discrimination within the correctional system that infringes on their basic human rights (Canadian Human Rights Commission; 2003a, 2003b).

In this study, the provincial correctional system itself had a tremendous amount of influence on women’s incarceration and reintegration. How women were treated on the inside, the amount of programming, services, support, and treatment they received, and the overall jail environment directly influenced their transition experiences. Being incarcerated in facilities with men was oppressive and hindered women’s treatment and healing. Additionally, the rigid correctional environment resulted in women becoming institutionalized, which had debilitating emotional and physical effects on women that inhibited their ability to adjust to and function “normally” within the community once they

exited they system. Furthermore, the lack of programming and pre-release planning in provincial jails made it practically impossible for women to address their issues prior to being released, which made the already difficult reintegration process even more challenging.

The women who participated in this study wanted to see a major overhaul of the provincial correctional facilities in Atlantic Canada. Of utmost importance was the need for women to be taken out of male correctional facilities and for the provincial correctional system to take into account the gender-specific and cultural needs and experiences of the women it imprisons. Furthermore, alternatives to incarceration were seen by participants as being extremely important. The women also called for greater access to programming, services, and therapeutic supports within the provincial correctional system. Participants argued that service providers should be allowed to come in from the community and offer programming, services, and support to women in provincial jails and be given appropriate compensation for their time. Moreover, participants wanted the opportunity to access services *in the community* while carrying out their sentence. As well, they called for mandatory pre-release planning to be instituted in the provincial correctional system to help women make a more seamless transition from incarceration to the community. For example, Charlene stated:

“I mean, I think someone should be involved before the person is released at least a month before. You have to find a place to stay. You have to figure out what you’re going to do for money. How you are going to deal with whatever issues you have? I know for myself, I really could have used support in being sent in the

right direction to deal with what I had to deal with so I wouldn't keep re-offending."

This study identified numerous environmental settings or community supports that influenced the lives of provincially sentenced women in the Atlantic Region. From a relational-cultural perspective, it is not enough to view community organizations merely as "social supports," which are often one-dimensional in that it is typically only those receiving such support who obtain something from others (Hartling, 2008). Instead, it is important that a sense of authentic connection be fostered in women's engagement with community supports, meaning that there is a bi-directional nature of relationships in which all of those involved benefit (Hartling, 2008).

Feminist community psychologists propose that in order to promote meaningful participation in community organizations or supports, a culture of connection and recognition of multiple realities, that is, that people's experiences are affected by gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, and disability, must be part of the organizational context. Bond (1999) argues that the recognition of mutuality is critical for promoting inclusion among marginalized group members. She maintains that settings that promote connections must be founded on empathy, reciprocity, and sustainability. As well, "Recognizing difference and creating contexts that acknowledge and value multiple "realities" involves not just acknowledging differences, but also understanding the forces that have rendered some realities less visible and less legitimate than others and making room for marginalized groups to define their own reality versus having their experiences [sic] named for them" (Bond, 1993, p. 337).

For the most part, the women who participated in this study did not feel a sense of connection to community-based supports nor did they feel that their experiences were valued, except in the case of feminist-oriented community organizations. Feminist organizations, such as Elizabeth Fry Society and Coverdale, fostered a sense of connection and legitimized participant's experiences by acknowledging their multiple realities, as well as recognizing and trying to address the larger social systemic forces that work to marginalize women. Furthermore, these organizations typically created an environment in which women could define their own realities and determine what supports best met their individual needs. Presumably, it is for these above-mentioned reasons that participants valued the support of feminist-oriented organizations and called for more programming, services, and supports for provincially sentenced women that promote an authentic connection, both on the inside and in community.

Societal Factors

By adopting an ecological framework for understanding women's reintegration, women's transition experiences can be further contextualized within the larger social-political context. In the ecological model, societal factors represent the most distal, or removed structures within the model that affect all other systems (including the individual). These structures are typically referred to as macrosystems and they include such elements as political philosophies, social policies, and societal resources. Following the ecological model, societal factors have been included in the feminist ecological framework I propose. However, unlike the majority of ecological models proposed by community psychologists to understand human behaviour, I include a gendered analysis of how societal factors impact women differently than men. Reintegration studies examining the influences of

societal factors have begun to emerge and been shown to have a tremendous impact on women's criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration experiences (Maidment, 2006a; Pollack, 2008; Richie, 2001). Societal factors also influenced women's lives in this study and played a large role in their reintegration. There were five key factors, including the socio-political context, feminization of poverty; violence against women, social norms, values, and stigmatization, as well as racism.

Socio-Political Context. The current socio-political climate is deeply rooted in neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies that value "individualism, freedom of choice, market dominance, and minimal state-involvement in the economy" (Balfour & Comack, 2006, p. 44). Since the late 1980's, dominant neo-liberal and neo-conservative philosophies have infiltrated governmental policies and practices, resulting in a drastically reduced welfare state. While the socio-political context has negatively impacted the entire population through regressive social and economic policies and practices, the most marginalized and disadvantaged members of our communities have suffered the most (Balfour & Comack, 2006). In particular, the inequitable policies that have been created under neo-liberal and neo-conservative governments and the redistribution of resources away from social well-being towards individual wealth have disproportionately impacted women and girls.

Under the neo-liberal administration, policies related to education, employment standards and minimum wage, healthcare, childcare, housing, and social assistance have severely affected women. For example, unjust policies and practices continue to leave women earning less than men do, even in occupations most commonly held by women (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2009). In addition, women comprise the largest

proportion of those working minimum wage jobs or receiving government-assistance and rates for both make it difficult for women to live above the poverty line. As well, the fact that women comprise the majority of part-time and unpaid workforce renders many women ineligible to receive employment benefits under the current system (Bernier & Clow, 2009). In order to eradicate the gendered injustices that have transpired under this regime, equitable policies that validate women's experiences are needed. Examples of such policies include those that promote pay and employment equity, including equal pay for all jobs, a minimum wage that reflects a living wage, the creation of stable well-paying jobs, compensation for unpaid work, and inclusive and affordable employment benefits programs. In addition, policies that make childcare accessible and affordable to all, as well as reinvestments in social housing and changes to social assistance programs can help to improve the lives of women.

In regard to Corrections, criminal-justice policies and practices have also changed in neo-liberal and neo-conservative times. In this socio-political context, crime policies have focused on "getting tough on crime" (Balfour & Comack, 2006; Moore & Hannah-Moffat, 2002). Policy changes have resulted in the expansion of the scope and scale of penalization, bringing about dramatic increases in rates of imprisonment, especially among women (Balfour & Comack, 2006; Pate, 2006; Pollack, 2008). In fact, the rate of incarceration of women, particularly for racialized groups, now far exceeds those of men (Balfour & Comack, 2006; Sudbury, 2005). This trend is largely attributable to increasing criminalization among the economically marginalized – the majority of whom are women.

In addition to social policies, societal resources that support women have been drastically reduced under the current socio-political context. For example, women's groups

such as Status of Women Canada, a federal organization that works to advance equity for women and remove barriers for women's participation in society, have seen their funding disappear. In addition, new federal guidelines have been instituted that prohibit women's organizations from using public funds to support advocacy and lobby activities. Women-centred health facilities have also seen the cancellation of funding, raising barriers to equitable access to services which women need. Government supports to community organizations, especially non-profit agencies and women's centres have also been drastically cut or all together eliminated – forcing them to deliver a comprehensive set of cultural, recreational, social service, and other types of programs with minimal resources. Neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies of crime control have also seen the redistribution of resources move from rehabilitation efforts to risk-management tactics, because “criminals” are viewed as being responsible for their choices rather than being in need of support (Balfour & Comack, 2006; Hannah-Moffat, 2002).

Women in Atlantic Canada have suffered the ill-effects of the current socio-political context. In a region already characterized by economic deprivation, neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies have pushed women further to the margins. There are more women living in poverty in the Atlantic Region than in any other part of the country. Government assistance incomes in Atlantic Canada are among the lowest in the country (National Council of Welfare, 2006). Women on income assistance cannot even afford the average rent of a bachelor apartment (Community Action on Homelessness, 2009). In addition, unemployment rates among women in all four provinces are considerably higher than in the rest of the country (Cameron, 2003). Few community resources and women-centred organizations exist to support women (Smith & Parriag, 2005). Many Atlantic communities

lack transition houses, halfway houses, and shelters (Maidment 2006c; Pollack, no date). In addition, there is a shortage of mental health and addiction treatment facilities available to women (Smith & Parriag, 2005).

The women who participated in this study had been profoundly affected by systemic barriers created under the neo-liberal and neo-conservative socio-political context. The inequitable policies, practices, and distribution of resources that have emerged under this particular philosophy of governance has made it increasingly difficult for women, especially in the Atlantic Region, to attain a post-secondary education, secure a stable and well-paying job, afford shelter and food, pay for childcare, access healthcare, receive adequate government assistance when needed, and so on. As a result, many of the women who participated in this study found themselves struggling to survive and attributed much of their criminalization to the larger systemic barriers that worked against them on a daily basis. And, as many of the women reported, these societal forces continued to present challenges for them upon exiting jail, making reintegration a daunting task:

“I have to walk back out to the same thing I left when I came in here and (pause) I don’t know what to do really.” (Butterfly)

The provincial correctional system did very little to assist women in breaking down some of the social systemic barriers they faced in their lives on the outside that excluded them from full participation in society. The shift in correctional philosophies from prevention and rehabilitation towards punishment, control, and risk-management has resulted in fewer resources directed at providing supports, services, and programming to criminalized women and men. The limited resources that are available tend to be filtered into support services for men (even within the same jails), as they comprise the larger

proportion of the correctional population. There was no question among the women who participated in this study that men received more supports, services, and programming than women did inside the walls of Atlantic provincial jails. Support services were largely contingent upon the amount of societal resources available within each correctional facility, as well as the communities in which the jails were located. In fact, as this study illustrates, nearly all the supports that were available to criminalized women, both inside and out, were offered by community-based organizations – most of which were non-profit organizations with few resources to begin with.

Across the Atlantic Region, participants reported that the jails were ill-equipped to respond to the needs of women and worked to further marginalize and oppress women. Few services existed. In fact, in two out of the four jails, there were next to no supports for the female jail-population. As this study demonstrated, the only program offered consistently to women in provincial jails across the region was high school educational programs or its equivalency. There were no apparent policies, practices, or resources in place to help women secure affordable housing, gain employment skills, receive mental health and other healthcare services, to obtain social assistance immediately upon release, and to address addiction issues that often stemmed from histories of violence, trauma, and abuse. These services could be crucial supports that could assist women in breaking the cycle of criminalization and promote “successful” reintegration.

Many of the women contended that unless larger systemic changes occurred, the fate of women, especially those who had been or were in danger of being criminalized was bleak. One way that the correctional system can work to break down the barriers women face is by forming partnerships with other agencies, as well as all levels of government. In addition,

the women who participated in this study argued that correctional practices need to move away from punishment towards therapeutic supports to better support women. As well, they believed that in order to enhance services for women, both the government and Corrections need to invest money and resources in community-based organizations throughout the Atlantic Region to create services specifically designed to meet the needs of women, as well as general programs to assist the larger community. Participants also suggested that through the help of feminist-oriented agencies, women could come together to advocate for their rights and engage in initiatives to change governmental philosophies, policies, and practices to better the lives of all women in this country, and particularly those who live on the margins of society.

Feminization of Poverty. The theme of poverty is interwoven into many of the components already discussed in the feminist ecological reintegration framework I propose. While it may seem somewhat redundant to discuss poverty again here, it warrants a separate category because of the tremendous influence it has in shaping women's lives. Around the globe, the "perception is growing ...that poverty is becoming increasingly feminized, that is, that an increasing proportion of the world's poor are female" (Moghadam, 2005, p. 3). Feminization of poverty has been attributed to the increase in female-headed households, the presence and consequences of inequalities and bias against women and girls, and the global implementation of neo-liberal policies (Moghadam, 2005).

Feminization of poverty has become increasingly visible in Atlantic Canada, as in other parts of the country and around the world. It is now estimated that one in five women in Atlantic Canada live in poverty (GPI Atlantic, 2001). The feminization of poverty in the Atlantic Region may be attributable to the rise in the proportion of women who are raising

children on their own. Furthermore, pervasive gender-inequalities and biases that exist, as demonstrated throughout the various section of this framework, within the home, labour market, as well as the educational, legal, and political systems has rendered women more vulnerable than men to poverty.

Women's involvement in crime has been directly linked to the feminization of poverty (Balfour & Comack, 2006; Belknap, 2001). Feminists have argued that women are increasingly being criminalized for their economic marginalization and that women's economic situations deteriorate further while they are in jail/prison (Balfour & Comack, 2006; Neve & Pate, 2005). The poverty women experience prior to and during incarceration makes it virtually impossible for them to "successfully" reintegrate into the community (Pollack, 2008).

For the majority of women who participated in this study, economic deprivation was a reality that not only had a profound impact on their criminalization and incarceration, but on their reintegration experiences as well. Most of the participants did not have the financial resources to survive and typically found themselves in precarious situations upon exiting the provincial correctional system. Over and over again, the women I spoke with told stories of leaving jail with nothing and having little opportunity to increase their economic situations once they were released. When they needed assistance, the women said they often had to wait long periods of time before they received financial support from the government. Even when they received their cheques, there was rarely enough money to pay for necessities. For many of the women who participated in this study, having the monetary resources to obtain shelter, food, and clothing was the determining factor between "making it" upon returning to the community and returning to jail.

Participants suggested that one way to help women's economic position immediately upon exiting the correctional system was to change social assistance policies so that they could apply for welfare support prior to their release. In addition, the women who participated in this study called for increased social-assistance amounts that would allow them to afford basic necessities such as housing, food, and clothing until they got back on their feet. Participants also believed that broader systemic changes were needed to improve the economic situation of women.

Social Norms, Values, and Stigmatization. Social norms are implicit and explicit guides or rules within a group or society that deem what are appropriate and inappropriate values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours (Wei, 2009). Social values emerge from the norms set by society and, in simple terms, can be defined as the judgements people make about what is right and wrong (Wei, 2009). Perceived deviation from norms and values can result in severe social stigma, including disapproval, punishment, and exclusion.

Although stigma is often used to depict an assortment of negative beliefs, attitudes, and actions, rarely are the social power structure that facilitate stigma acknowledged (Shimmin, 2009). According to Shimmin (2009), "stigma is contingent upon access to social, economic, and political power" and as a result women and men experience stigma differently (p. 14). She argues that stigma is more severe for women than it is for men because of "women's place in society, as those who bear and rear children and who are seen to uphold the moral and spiritual value of society" (p. 15).

The negative perception of those involved in criminality carries a strong social stigma, especially for women. Participating in criminal activities is seen as going against traditional female gender roles, and as such, criminalized women have been labelled as "monsters,"

“misfits,” and “manipulators” (Balfour & Comack, 2006). The negative labelling, stereotyping, overt discrimination, and misuse of power that women are subjected to are damaging (Shimmin, 2009). The stigma criminalized women experience is internalized, reshaping their identity and making it difficult for them to escape from their criminalization status and limiting their ability to participate in society (Steffensmeier & Kramer, 1980). As a result, women find it difficult to “successfully” reintegrate back into society upon exiting the correctional system (Evans, 2006; Maidment, 2006a; O’Brien, 2001b; O’Brien & Harm, 2002; Pollack, 2008).

Stigma was identified by the women who participated in this study as being an important factor that hindered their ability to “successfully” reintegrate into society. The women argued that social norms and values played a significant role in how they were viewed by other members in society and determined whether or not they were accepted by society or “othered.” Many of the women who participated in this study said that they felt that society looked down upon them, viewed them as “bad” people, and punished them for their involvement in activities that contradicted societal norms. These labels were often internalized by the women causing them to view themselves in a negative way. Participants argued that the stigma and shame they experienced as a result of their criminalization and subsequent incarceration isolated them in the community and made reintegration a difficult undertaking. For example, many women found it increasingly challenging to find employment and housing upon returning to the community because of the stigma attached to their criminalization and incarceration histories.

The women who participated in this study said that individual counselling and peer support groups were needed to help women deal with the shame and stigma they

experienced upon returning to the community. Furthermore, because their crimes were often publicized in local media, the women called for more discretion by media outlets. Participants also recommended that community-based organizations engage in public education activities and raise awareness among the general public about women's criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration experiences. The women argued that these types of activities could result in greater tolerance among society for people who may not conform to social norms and values. Furthermore, participants believed that educating employers and housing proprietors about women's lived experiences would help women find jobs and a place to live upon re-entry.

Violence Against Women. Inequalities in power make women more susceptible to being victims of violence in society (Belknap, 2001). In fact, women experience violence at a rate of six times that of men (Statistics Canada, 2006b). When examining diverse groups of women, statistics show that Aboriginal women are three times more likely than non-Aboriginal women are to be victims of violence (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Not only are women more likely than men to experience violence in their lives, but they are more likely to be victimized by someone they are familiar with, whereas men are more likely to be victims of violence at the hands of someone unknown to them (Statistics Canada, 2006b). In 2004, 94% of all female homicide victims were killed by a spouse, former partner, family member, or an acquaintance (Statistics Canada, 2006b). In comparison, in the same year, men were more likely to be killed by a stranger.

It is difficult to acquire an accurate account of the prevalence of violence among women given the reliance on self-reported data. Therefore, it is not known if women in Atlantic Canada share similar histories of violence with women in other parts of the country.

However, a recent report examining the rates of spousal violence across the provinces shows that Prince Edward Island has the third highest rate of spousal abuse (16%) in all of Canada, while the remaining three Atlantic provinces were among the lowest percentages (8-10%) in the country (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2008). Few services exist in Atlantic Canada, especially in rural areas, to support women who have experienced violence, trauma, and abuse in their lives. There are only a limited number of shelters and transition houses for women fleeing from violence and the majority that do exist are located in the larger populated metropolitan areas (National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 2008).

There is a significant body of literature demonstrating that extensiveness of victimization histories among criminalized women (Adelberg & Currie, 1987, 1993; Comack, 1993, 1996; Comack & Balfour, 2004; Fortin, 2004; Greenfeld & Snell, 1999; Owen, 1998; Pollock, 2002, Richie, 1996; Shaw, 1991). The percentage of women in prison who have experienced violence at some point in their lives is alarming, especially among Aboriginal female prisoners (TFFSW, 1990). Estimates show that approximately 80% of women in Canadian jails/prisons have been on the receiving end of some form of abuse (TFFSW, 1990). In comparison to male prisoners, incarcerated women have far higher rates of physical and sexual abuse (Blanchette & Motiuk, 1996; Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2003b).

Few frameworks for understanding and addressing women's reintegration, such as the empowerment framework proposed by O'Brien (2001a, 2001b), have included women's victimization histories as a distinct component of their model. Histories of violence were pervasive among the women who participated in this study. The majority of women who

participated in this study had long-standing histories of neglect, violence, trauma, and abuse that manifested into poor mental health and addictions as a means of coping with their past. Participants argued that women who were able to receive therapeutic support to deal with the underlying issues (e.g., childhood sexual assault, partner violence, etc.) that led to their criminalization were more likely to be “successful” upon returning to the community. However, the majority of participants were not able to access such supports while incarcerated, because such services did not exist and the community-based supports that existed in the region were often primarily for male clients and inaccessible because of lengthy wait-times and treatment fees.

The women who participated in this study called for feminist-oriented therapeutic supports to be implemented as core programming within the provincial correctional system to address issues of violence, trauma, and abuse:

“It would be really nice to talk to somebody about being abused sexually and molested and emotionally abused, you know, counselling for that!”(Vicky)

Specifically, participants wanted greater access to individual counselling and peer support groups to help them deal with the trauma and violence in their lives, the mental health issues that have emerged as a result, and the addictions they have developed as a coping mechanism. In addition, the women who participated in this study addressed the need for more therapeutic supports and treatment facilities for women across the Atlantic Region and increased accessibility among those that already exist.

Racism. Canada is recognized as being a diverse country whose population represents a whole host of racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. The country has a large population of Aboriginal peoples, representing 3.4% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2005b).

In comparison to the Western provinces, there are relatively small numbers of Aboriginal women living in the Atlantic Region (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Further racialized groups in the region include a large population of Indigenous Black people, particularly in Nova Scotia where they represent 2% of the province's total population (SCPIW, 1992).

Aboriginal women and girls comprise approximately 3% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2005b). Their growth rate is the highest in the country. Between 1996 and 2001, the number of Aboriginal women and girls rose by 22% (Statistics Canada, 2006b). During the same timeframe, the growth rate among the non-Aboriginal female population equalled a mere 4% (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Aboriginal women and girls are among the most marginalized in Canada. They are more likely than other women to be lone parents, head households with a greater number of children, have poorer health, experience greater incidences of violence, experience barriers to education, have lower levels of educational attainment, be unemployed, have significantly lower incomes, and be dependent on government social assistance (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

The racialization of women in prison “represents one of the most vivid examples of racial disparity in our society” (Richie, 2001, p. 369). Racialized women around the world are now imprisoned at a faster rate than any other group (Neve and Pate, 2005; Sudbury, 2005). In Canada, Aboriginals are disproportionately represented within the correctional system – with Aboriginal women having higher rates of imprisonment than Aboriginal men (Johnston, 1987; Statistics Canada, 2008). In regard to the provincial correctional system, the representation of Aboriginal women sentenced to custody is higher than that of Aboriginal men, at 31% versus 20% (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Furthermore, the rate of

imprisonment among Aboriginal women in provincial jails has risen substantially, jumping from 26% to 31% between 1994 and 2004 (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

As in the rest of the country, racialized groups are over-represented in the prison system in Atlantic Canada. For example, Aboriginal women represent approximately 12% of the federal and provincial correctional population (Correctional Services Canada, 2002). In Nova Scotia, it has been estimated that Black women comprise as much as 20% of the province's total jail/prison population (SCPIW, 1992). A large proportion (28%) of the women who participated in this study identified as Aboriginal, Black, or Biracial.

Participants did not identify any culturally-relevant programming, services, supports, or therapeutic treatments within the provincial correctional system across the Atlantic Region. In addition, based on the accounts of the women who participated in this study, cultural programs for criminalized women are virtually non-existent in Atlantic communities, which is similar to findings from earlier research coming out of the region that have identified this gap in services (Maidment, 2006a; SCPIW, 1992; Smith & Parriag, 2005). Participants called for more culturally-appropriate programming within the provincial correctional context and in the community to better support racialized women who have criminalization histories.

CHAPTER SEVEN: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE, THEORY, AND RESEARCH

The findings from this study and previous research have established that multiple factors influence women's transition. Individual, relational, environmental, *and* societal elements work to promote or hinder reintegration. The feminist ecological framework I propose demonstrates the importance of addressing the needs of criminalized women on all four dimensions in order to better support them both in jail and in the community. Clear policy, practice, theoretical, and research implications derive from the firsthand accounts of the women who participated in this study. In this chapter, I offer recommendations for change in policies and practices and make suggestions for future theoretical and research endeavours based on the themes that emerged from the research findings, including ideas put forth by the participants themselves. Finally, I end the chapter with concluding remarks.

Policy

The study's findings illustrate that women's criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration are inextricably linked by the larger social, economic, and political injustices women face in society. Criminalized women are among the most marginalized populations and as the stories of the women who participated in this study show, there are multiple issues that need to be addressed on a societal level in order to better meet the needs of women. Without systemic changes that attend to housing, income assistance, education, employment, healthcare, and so forth, women will continue to find themselves in the same precarious situations – at no fault of their own. Federal, provincial, and regional governments and policy-makers need to take ownership over the dismal situations that policies and a lack of social services have created for marginalized groups under the neo-

liberal and neo-conservative regime, especially among women, and work towards instituting more equitable and socially responsible policies and resources.

Providing Safe and Affordable Housing Options. Women are more likely than men are to have acute housing need given their lower average income (Haworth-Brockman & Donner, 2009). High rates of poverty among women in the Atlantic Region and a lack of affordable housing options have left many living in unsafe and unhealthy living environments (AHANS, 2007). Criminalized women in particular often live in precarious housing-situations prior to incarceration, such as temporary shelters either in the community or with family or friends, unsafe home environments with abusive partners, poor quality housing in unsafe neighbourhoods, or on the street. Upon exiting the correctional system, the women who participated in this study often had nowhere to go and no financial resources to secure safe and affordable shelter, finding themselves in unstable and often times hazardous housing-situations.

Government policies that are responsive to the high rate of housing-need among women are needed to better support criminalized women as they make the difficult transition from incarceration to the community. Strategic, gender-sensitive, housing policies, including initiatives to construct more affordable housing projects throughout the region (both in rural and urban communities) would help to provide women with viable housing options upon exiting the provincial correctional system. Currently, there are not enough affordable social housing units available for those in need (Beaton, 2004). Furthermore, allocating resources to feminist-oriented community-based organizations to establish women-centred supportive living environments and multi-staged housing alternatives across the region would be instrumental in providing criminalized women with a safe place to go immediately upon

exiting the correctional system and until they are able to secure long-term housing. As it stands now, there are only a handful of shelters, transition housing, halfway houses, and residential treatment facilities across the region to assist women upon release and the majority are either male-dominated or reserved for federally sentenced women.

Increasing Access to and Payment Amounts of Government Social Assistance. The social, economic, and political oppression of women has meant that a larger proportion of women than men have to rely on social assistance for income, especially single mothers (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Criminalized women are often reliant on social assistance prior to incarceration and again after their release given their histories of marginalization. Almost all the women who participated in this study were receiving government assistance before incarceration and upon returning to the community. Social assistance payments in the Atlantic Region are the lowest in the country ranging from \$683 a month in Newfoundland and Labrador to a staggering \$285 in New Brunswick (National Council of Welfare, 2006), making it difficult for women to afford basic needs, such as shelter, food, and clothing. Furthermore, women cannot collect income assistance while incarcerated and no paid work is available in the provincial correctional system in Atlantic Canada, further perpetuating the economic deprivation of criminalized women.

In order to be more responsive to the needs of provincially sentenced women, and women in general, government social assistance amounts need to be increased to a level that provides women with sufficient income to obtain and maintain housing, buy nutritious food, clothing, and personal items, as well as afford childcare and educational or training opportunities. In addition, policy changes that allow women to submit their social assistance applications prior to their release so that they can receive payment immediately

upon exiting the provincial correctional system would be particularly beneficial. Currently, women have to wait until after their release to apply and, as a result, do not receive financial support for upwards of several weeks, which for many women who are already on the margins of society, is often too late.

Advancing Education and Vocational Training. While the number of women obtaining a post-secondary education continues to rise, with more and more women attending college and university than in the past, men are still more likely than women to hold a diploma or degree (Statistics Canada, 2006b). In the Atlantic Region, the reverse is true with more women than men having graduated from college or university (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Yet, Atlantic Canadian men are more likely than women are to be employed. Criminalized women characteristically have lower levels of educational attainment than the general population (Boritch, 1997). A number of the women who participated in this study had not completed high school and two women were illiterate. On the other hand, many had graduated from high school and either completed partial requirements or graduated from college or university. Regardless of education level, participants argued that few opportunities existed to gain the knowledge or skills necessary to obtain stable, well-paying employment in the region and called for more policies and programs to be made available to women in general and criminalized women specifically.

Gender-sensitive education and vocation policies that provide financial support for women and take into account their specific needs, such as childcare costs, would be particularly beneficial in helping women obtain a higher education and, in turn, secure employment. Government funding and bursaries specifically for women, especially for job training programs such as trades where well-paying jobs exist in the region, would provide

more opportunities for women to gain knowledge and skills, as well as secure stable employment. In addition, reducing tuition and related fees would make post-secondary education more affordable and accessible. Currently, tuition in Atlantic Canada is costly. The province of Nova Scotia has the highest fees in the country - almost double that of all other provinces (Canadian Broadcast Corporation, 2006).

Raising Incomes and Creating Stable Employment. Women in the Atlantic Region have the lowest incomes among women *and* men in all other provinces and have the highest rates of unemployment in the country (Cameron, 2003). Criminalized women often struggle with high rates of unemployment and low income, including the women who participated in this study. Women's economic situations decline further while in the provincial correctional system, as there is no paid work in the jails or programs to help women secure employment upon release, meaning that they exit the system with even less economic resources than when they entered.

Strategic policies and programs that are responsive to the employment and income needs of women are needed to eradicate the barriers criminalized women, and women in general, face. One way to be more responsive is to increase employment incomes of women to a level that at least equals that of men for the same job performed. In addition, given that women comprise the majority of low-wage earners and part-time employees (Statistics Canada, 2006b), it is critical that minimum wage be increased to a level that represents a living wage of \$10.00 an hour. At the time of the study, minimum wage rates in each of the four Atlantic provinces were: \$6.50 in New Brunswick, \$6.75 in Newfoundland and Labrador, \$7.15 in Nova Scotia, and \$7.15 in Prince Edward Island. Since 2006, some much needed steps have been taken by government to address poverty and minimum wages

have increased. For example, by 2009, the minimum wage in New Brunswick had risen to \$8.25, \$9.00 in Newfoundland and Labrador, \$8.60 in Nova Scotia, and \$8.40 in Prince Edward Island. Newfoundland and Labrador has committed to increasing minimum wages to a living wage of \$10.00 by 2010, putting increased pressure on other provinces in the region to respond (Canadian Broadcast Corporation, 2009).

Women, including criminalized populations, also need greater access to well-paying, stable employment in order to obtain an income sufficient enough to meet basic needs, such as housing, food, clothing, and childcare. One way that the federal and provincial government can be more responsive is to stimulate jobs in the region for women with low incomes, including criminalized women. All levels of government also needs to recognize the importance of what is traditionally considered “women’s work,” including unpaid activities such as caregiving, and provide adequate financial support for such jobs. As well, changes to employment insurance policies need to reflect the gender-specific employment positions of women, as women are currently more likely than men are to be excluded from these benefits due to greater rates of part-time, seasonal, and unpaid work (Bernier & Clow, 2009).

Addressing Mental Health and Addiction. Women report higher incidences of mental illness and addiction than their male counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2006b) and criminalized women have considerably higher rates of mental illness than the general female population (Laishes, 2002). Additionally, criminalized women, including the majority of women who participated in this study, suffer more often and extensively from addiction than male prisoners and men in the community (Decker, 1992; Greenfeld & Snell, 1999; Kassebaum & Chandler, 1994; Staton, Leukefeld, & Webster, 2003).

There are few gender-specific addiction and mental health services across the Atlantic Region (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). Most government-funded treatment-services, including both out- and in-patient programs, are primarily for men with separate units or program spaces for women. For example, in Prince Edward Island the Women's Rehabilitation Program is run out of the Provincial Addiction Treatment Facility. In order to be more responsive to the needs of women, government investments in the emotional and mental health and well-being of women through the allocation of dollars to community-based organizations are needed to develop and expand feminist-oriented, gender-specific therapeutic supports, methadone programs, and residential treatment facilities for women throughout the region. For example, providing funding for non-profit holistic long-term residential facilities for women in recovery from addiction and abuse, such as the Marguerite Centre in Nova Scotia and Lacey House in Prince Edward Island, would allow for more women to gain treatment and healing in a women-centred environment. In addition, policy initiatives that cover treatment-fees under the public health care system would allow greater access to treatment regardless of economic status.

Making Healthcare More Accessible. In general, women have poorer health and suffer from more chronic illnesses than men (Statistics Canada, 2006b). When we look at criminalized women as a group, we see that they experience more frequent and serious health issues than both women and men in the general population, as well as the male prison population (Maruschak & Beck, 1997). Many of the women who participated in this study self-reported emotional, mental, and physical health issues, which were largely attributable to their socio-economic positions. In fact, poverty has been identified as one of the strongest predictors of poor health (Doyal, 1995).

There are many cultural and socio-economic barriers that make quality healthcare inaccessible for women in the Atlantic Region, especially those living on low incomes, including a large proportion of women in rural and coastal communities. Healthcare policies need to reflect the lower economic status of women by including more services and covering the costs of medications under public healthcare. As well, the government needs to institute policies and mechanisms to ensure that Atlantic women have access to a family physician. Many women and men in the region do not have family physicians, and major shortages of health care professional have been reported among rural and small communities in Atlantic Canada (Tryon, 2006). In addition, private healthcare insurance needs to be more affordable and accessible for those with low incomes, as it is not an option for many women given that they are less likely than men to be employed full-time or in jobs where employers offer extended medical and dental plans (Bernier & Clow, 2009).

At all levels of government, resources are needed to establish women-centred holistic healthcare centres in various communities across the Atlantic Region to address the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical aspects of women's health. Holistic women's health centres are beginning to emerge in the region. For example, the Lindsay's Health Centre for Women in Antigonish, Nova Scotia opened in 2005 to provide multi-disciplinary women-centred primary health care programs and services for women and adolescent girls. The centre works towards breaking down barriers to quality healthcare for underserved and hard-to-reach women, welcoming women with diverse racial, cultural, sexual orientation backgrounds. More federal and provincial government funding would allow centres like these to reach out to criminalized women, including providing in-community services for women incarcerated in provincial correctional facilities across the region, allowing them to

be active participants in their own health and well-being in confidential settings and allowing for continuity in care upon exiting jail.

Moving Towards Gender-Specific Correctional Policies and Creating Alternative to Incarceration. Policy alternatives to those that have been created under traditional ideologies of punishment and control are desperately needed. A paradigm shift in philosophies towards healing and well-being is better suited to meet the needs of women. Correctional policies and practices would also be strengthened if they spoke to the gender-specific needs of women, including histories of victimization, addiction and mental health, motherhood, as well as addressing issues surrounding women's social, political, and economical marginalization.

The findings from this study show that being incarcerated in provincial jails in the Atlantic Region is a horrific experience for women and appears to be even more oppressive than the federal correctional system. Allowing women access to the "yard" at least once a day is one way Corrections could begin to address the poor living conditions of women in the provincial correctional system across the Atlantic Region. In addition, changes to the high level of security and surveillance measures currently employed in provincial correctional facilities are needed. Currently, the level of security does not match the "risk" women pose, as the majority of women who are in provincial custody have committed minor crimes and do not pose a threat to correctional personnel or the larger community. While making changes to environmental conditions and practices within the provincial correctional system is important, more radical transformations are needed. For example, urgent changes to correctional policies to take women out of small, overcrowded units in male-dominated provincial correctional facilities are needed.

In an attempt to be more responsive to the needs of imprisoned women, the federal correctional system created women-only regional correctional facilities. However, feminist advocates and scholars have argued that these prisons have done little to meet the needs of criminalized women (Pollack, 2008). Housing women in jails/prisons does nothing to address the larger social issues that impact women's criminalization and only serves to push women further to the margins of society. However, immediate actions are necessary in the provincial system to get women out of the oppressive environment as soon as possible, perhaps requiring women to be housed in female-only facilities until alternatives can be created. Community-based alternatives to women's imprisonment must be seriously considered by Corrections. Alternatives that give women access to diverse community-based services that address underlying issues related to their criminalization are desperately needed. For example, mental health support, addiction treatment, healthcare, housing, education, job training and placement, and parenting support.

Provincial governmental support is needed to provide resources to develop a "Special Committee" comprised of various stakeholders, including representatives from the provincial government, correctional personnel, community-based organizations, feminist-oriented agencies that support criminalized women, and criminalized women themselves, to create a framework for community-based alternatives to incarceration and to see that the recommendations put forth by the committee are actualized. Working collaboratively, the "Special Committee" would be responsible for crafting alternatives to incarceration with women's needs at the centre, rather than on the periphery. Special care would be taken by the group to ensure that any alternative measures would not serve to widen the expansion of state control in women's lives. Given the relatively small number of provincially sentenced

women in the Atlantic Regions, it is feasible that community alternatives could be introduced, phasing out jails altogether, and setting a precedent to be celebrated worldwide. The difficulty in making abolition a reality is getting people to think outside the dominant perspectives and imagine that women might actually be better served in the community. As Davis (2003) said, prisons are such a permanent fixture in our social lives that it is hard for people to imagine life without them.

Practice

In addition to policy implications, the study's findings give way to numerous recommendations for programming, services, supports, and treatments that can be instituted by both the correctional system and community-based organizations to better support women entangled within the provincial correctional system. For example, I propose practices that promote mutually-empowering relationships, feminist therapeutic supports for histories of violence, mental health, and addiction, educational and employment programs, and so forth, to address the issues identified by the women who participated in this study.

Developing and Maintaining Growth-Fostering Relationships. Relationships are central in women's lives (Miller, 1986, 2008a; Surrey, 1984). They provide a source of comfort, feelings of acceptance, and emotional support. Relational connectedness is important in fostering empowerment, inner strength, and resilience among women (Hartling, 2008; Miller, 1986, 2008a). The women who participated in this study highlighted the negative effects that the absence of relationships can have during incarceration and upon returning to the community, demonstrating the importance of providing provincially sentenced women

with mutually empowering relationships and a sense of connectedness to others during these difficult times in their lives.

In order to be more responsive to the needs of criminalized women, opportunities for women to engage in growth-fostering relationships both in the provincial correctional system and in the community are needed, including those with correctional personnel, therapists, health professional, family and children, peers, women with shared experiences, etc. Programs, such as the Women-in-Prison Project in the US, which is premised on the Stone Centre's relational-cultural theory, have shown that mutually empowering relationships are both necessary and possible to achieve with incarcerated women by creating a power-with approach to relationships that honours the strengths of women and, in turn, increases connection and well-being (Jenkins, 2004).

In particular, the provincial correctional system and community-based organizations would be strengthened by providing criminalized women with opportunities to participate in informal and formal peer support and mentoring programs. According to participants, the subject matter of these groups should be diverse and speak to such issues as violence against women, mental health issues, addiction, parenting and children, shame and stigma, as well as women's criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration experiences. It is vital that criminalized women be hired to facilitate peer support groups and mentorship programs with additional assistance provided by professionals.

Maintaining a Connection Between Women and Their Children. The majority of criminalized women are mothers, and worrying about the well-being of children is often the most stressful aspect of imprisonment for women (Belknap, 2001; Bloom & Steinhart, 1993; Boudin, 1997; Farrell, 1998; Mayhew, 1994; Owen, 1998; Richie, 2001). The

provincial correctional system in Atlantic Canada would be more responsive to the needs of incarcerated women, if they implemented practices that allowed women to maintain a connection with their children. Limited access to telephones and other forms of communication (e.g., sending letters and voice recordings) made it difficult for women to sustain relationships with their daughters and sons. In order to better maintain relationships between women in jail and their children, it would be valuable for the provincial correctional system to allow women more access to the telephone to communicate with their children.

In addition to poor communication-media, the women reported that provincial jails did not provide adequate safe space for women to visit with their children. Participants found it particularly problematic that male prisoners were in the visitation rooms while they were visiting with their children and recommended that this practice stop so that women felt more comfortable having their children visit. As well, the visitation spaces were not child-friendly, rarely having toys or other aspects that made the space comforting to children and participants suggested that special areas be created that resembled a toy room. In addition, the women who participated in this study encouraged the correctional system to provide women with more opportunities to spend quality one-on-one time with their children. Ideally, visitations would occur outside of the jail environment in the community. Furthermore, innovative alternatives to incarcerating mothers that allow women to serve their sentence in the community where they can continue to reside with their children would be more responsive to the needs of provincially sentenced women.

Providing Feminist-Oriented Therapeutic Counselling. Histories of trauma, violence, and abuse, as well as mental health issues and addiction are three critical, interrelated issues

that play a large role in the criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration experiences of women. Left unaddressed because of a lack of one-on-one counselling available to women in the provincial correctional system in Atlantic Canada, issues of victimization, poor mental health, and addiction presented major obstacles for the women who participated in this study. The provincial correctional system would be more responsive to meeting the needs of women under their care, if they provided opportunities for women to engage in meaningful one-on-one therapeutic support. However, as Pollack and Brezina (2006) noted, there is an inherent contradiction in providing therapeutic services within correctional facilities whose mandates are to punish and control. Therefore, I recommend that women receive therapeutic one-on-one counselling in the community during incarceration, which would also allow for continuity in care upon re-entry.

In particular, women need support from feminist-oriented female therapists who reject traditional psychological theories that individualize and pathologize women's experiences and instead understand women's experiences in terms of the effects trauma has had in shaping their lives and within the social context in which they live, including larger systemic issues of oppression (Zerbe Ennis, 2004). Other central principles regarding a feminist therapeutic approach include the acknowledgement of power differentials and working towards sharing power, valuing confidentiality, focusing on women's strengths, allowing women to define their own needs and experiences, as well as viewing women as competent, strong, and capable (Zerbe Ennis, 2004). Furthermore, encouraging mutually empathetic therapeutic relationships built on respect and a willingness of the therapist to understand how a woman's life might feel to her, legitimizes women's experiences and promotes connection, which is important for fostering growth and change (Bond, 1999;

Miller, 1982, 1986, 2008a, 2008b; Surrey, 1984). Pollack and Brezina (2006) argued that feminist therapeutic relationships that promote collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and advocacy could be particularly transformative in the lives of criminalized women.

Offering Medically Assisted Detox and Addiction Treatment Services. While psychological and emotional therapeutic support is an important aspect in dealing with the underlying issues that led to women's addiction, participants also said that women in the provincial correctional system need medical assistance detoxifying and recovering from the physical effects of alcohol and drug abuse. Currently, upon entering jail, women are not provided any medical assistance and are left to detox without medication to manage the physical and emotional pain that ensues as their bodies empty from drugs. To address this gap in services within the provincial correctional system, it is recommended that women should be sent to detox centres in the community prior to incarceration in order to receive the necessary medical treatment they require. In areas of the region where detox centres do not exist, it would be important for the correctional system to employ full-time medical professionals who can aid women through detoxification and as they enter into recovery and maintenance.

In addition, the women who participated in this study spoke of the urgent need for methadone to treat dependence on opioid drugs, such as heroin, codeine, and morphine. Currently, women who enter the provincial correctional system already on methadone are the only ones allowed to receive the treatment on the inside. However, women who are addicted to opioids and have not had the opportunity to receive methadone treatment in the community should be able to start treatment in jail. Given that there is only a handful of methadone programs across all four of the Atlantic provinces, with long wait-lists, it would

be a prime opportunity for the provincial correctional system to partner with government to institute methadone programs for women in jail in order to provide them with the necessary treatment they required to beat their opioid addictions. The provincial system in the Atlantic could be instrumental in developing an innovative pilot project for provincially sentenced women, introducing methadone treatment within jails throughout the region.

There were three other aspects of addiction services that participants thought would be particularly beneficial if made available to women by the provincial correctional system, including long-term residential treatment, addiction programming, and peer support groups. Many of the women who participated in this study had serious and chronic addictions issues that needed to be addressed long-term in residential facilities. Instead of spending time in the provincial correctional system where very little addiction support is offered, women would be better served to receive treatment in the community where such long-term addiction support exists.

Participants also wanted to see more addiction programming available on the inside. For example, in correctional facilities where Alcoholics and Narcotic Anonymous programs are available, participants suggested that women-only meetings be held, as they currently run AA and NA as co-ed programs in provincial jails. Furthermore, in correctional facilities, such as in Clarenville, Newfoundland, where no addiction programs exist, it was suggested that AA and NA be brought in by Corrections to help women address their addiction issues.

The women who participated in this study also said that peer support groups would be particularly helpful for women battling addiction. It would be cost-effective for Corrections to provide such groups for women, as all that would be required is space for the meetings

and perhaps an honorarium for paying a woman in the community to facilitate the groups, or the women themselves could run the peer support groups after receiving training.

Promoting Quality Healthcare Services. In addition to the larger healthcare issues that I discussed earlier in the policy section, there are a number of simple changes that Corrections could make to healthcare services in provincial jails across the region that would require little or no additional financial resources. Of utmost importance is creating an atmosphere where women feel safe discussing their health issues and care needs. For example, instead of disregarding women's health and medical concerns, correctional staff and health professionals could take all reported healthcare needs seriously and allow women appropriate medical attention. In addition, the women felt that the presence of correctional guards in examination rooms created a sense of power differentials and uncertainty about confidentiality as they discussed their health issues with medical professionals. The quality of healthcare services would be strengthened if correctional personnel were not allowed in the treatment room. As well, participants said that they were not provided with a short-term supply of medications upon release and had a difficult time gaining access to medical professionals on the outside to continue medications that were prescribed while they were incarcerated. Additionally, given their economic situations upon release, many criminalized women cannot afford medications upon returning to the community. A more responsible system of healthcare would be for Corrections to provide women with a minimum of two weeks of prescription medications to last them until they can see their family physicians.

In addition to these smaller changes that could be instituted rather easily, it would be optimal for the provincial correctional system to work towards permitting incarcerated

women to receive healthcare in the community. This practice would allow women to be more actively involved in their own health and well-being. Healthcare services outside of the correctional system would also allow women the opportunity to receive care in a safe and confidential environment. Furthermore, community healthcare services ensure that that care could be continued after incarceration.

Instituting Education, Vocational, and Employment Programs. In addition to the policy level changes I proposed above to better meet the needs of women, there is also a need for educational, vocational, and employment programs to be implemented in the provincial correctional system across the Atlantic Region. Currently, educational programs in provincial jails consist only of high school courses or their equivalency. In order to be more responsive to the needs of provincially sentenced women, it is important for the correctional system to work in collaboration with local educational institutions so that women can access higher level educations.

In addition to a lack of educational programming on the inside, there are no vocational or employment programs available to incarcerated women in the region to help them secure long-term employment. One immediate way to better support women would be for Corrections to pay women for the work they currently carry out on the inside, including food preparation, cleaning the facilities, and doing laundry. In addition, implementing skill training and work placement programs would be key to helping women obtain the skills and experience necessary to secure employment upon release. Furthermore, allowing women to work or receive training in the community would be optimal, as it would foster positive relationships among local employers and provide women with paid employment that could be continued upon release.

One example of an education and employment program that supports criminalized women after incarceration, as well as women experiencing homelessness or other issues and barriers related to living in poverty, is Our Thyme Café and Catering in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Our Thyme Café is operated by the Elizabeth Fry Society in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services Employment Support Program and Service Canada's Employment Program. The program provides life skills, job readiness, and hands on paid training for women to work in the culinary arts and food safety sector. The Café has seen many women graduate successfully from the program and gain employment. Provincial Corrections could partner with programs, such as Our Thyme Café, to provide incarcerated women with the same type of training and paid employment.

Educating Provincial Correctional Staff on the Gender-Specific Needs of Criminalized Women. In jail, women interact with correctional staff on a daily basis, shaping their experiences. To better meet the needs of criminalized women, the philosophies and practices of individuals employed within the provincial correctional system need to be addressed. Staff sensitivity training conducted by feminist-oriented agencies would be an important program for Corrections to implement in provincial correctional facilities throughout the Atlantic Region. The training would educate staff about the gender-specific needs of women (e.g., histories of violence, mental health and addiction issues, and motherhood), situating their experiences within the broader social context. In addition, the training program would encourage correctional personnel to move away from operating on philosophies of punishment and control and focus instead on healing and well-being in order to facilitate more positive relationships between staff and criminalized women.

Instituting a Regional Advocate. According to the firsthand accounts of the women who participated in this study, the quality of care women received in the provincial correctional system was substandard. In order to be more responsive to the needs of provincially sentenced women, I recommend that the provincial government fund the position of a Regional Advocate to regularly visit provincial correctional facilities across the region overseeing jail conditions, practices, supports, and the overall treatment of women. The Regional Advocate would work out of feminist-oriented community organizations and act as a liaison between women and the correctional system so that women had a mechanism through which they could discuss their imprisonment experiences, voice concerns, make complaints, be connected to community-based supports, as well as receive counsel and guidance from someone who had their best interests in mind.

There had been a Regional Advocate funded by the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies responsible for overseeing women's imprisonment experiences in the provincial and federal correctional system. However, the regional branches of EFry in Atlantic Canada have since turned the position into a "team." Only three out of the four EFry chapters (Mainland Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, and Saint John) are currently participating, meaning that women in other areas in the region, such as Newfoundland and Labrador, do not have access to the Regional Advocacy Team. In order to have sufficient funding to support a Regional Advocate that is truly "regional," resources from the provincial government are needed.

Making Release Planning a Core Component of Correctional Programming. The majority of women who participated in this study reported little to no release planning within the provincial correctional system in Atlantic Canada. Many participants lacked an

awareness of the types of programming, services, support, and treatment available in the community to assist them as they made the difficult journey from incarceration to the community. It is imperative that women receive release planning the moment they enter jail in order to arrange supports pivotal to facilitating “success” upon re-entry. Connecting women to necessary supports would be cost-effective for the provincial correctional system, especially if it meant that the cycle of criminalization was disrupted and women remained in the community upon release as opposed to returning to custody. Core components of release planning should include an initial one-on-one meeting with each woman to give her the platform to articulate and define her own experiences and needs. As well, women need to be given the opportunity to identify programs, services, supports, and treatments that she feels would be beneficial. After the initial meeting, each woman could then meet and work with a release counsellor at scheduled intervals throughout the duration of her incarceration to ensure that she is receiving the support she requires. In order to make release-planning successful, it is important for Corrections to work collaboratively alongside community service providers to establish a comprehensive network of women-centred and culturally-relevant supports that address issues of housing, income, education, employment, addiction, mental health, healthcare, peer support, counselling, and child welfare.

Continuing Community Education, Awareness-Raising, and Advocacy. In order for change to occur, it is important that feminist-oriented agencies, such as the Elizabeth Fry Society, continue to engage in activities that educate and raise awareness among all levels of government, policy-makers, practitioners, service providers, and the community about the underlying issues that contribute to women’s criminalization, incarceration, and

reintegration. These activities are pivotal in breaking down some of the stereotypes, stigma, and shame that criminalized women experience by situating their experiences within the broader social context. Advocacy efforts also speak to the importance of assuming a shared responsibility among society for the social, political, and economic marginalization of women and working towards policy and practice alternatives to better support women.

Theory

The current study builds upon feminist theories of women's reintegration. The findings support previous research that suggests women's transition from jail/prison is a complex process and points to the importance of understanding women's criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration experiences within the broader social context. In Chapter One, I described O'Brien's (2001a, 2001b) empowerment framework for assessing women's transition from prison. The framework incorporates an understanding of the internal resiliencies and external resources women in transition drew upon to cope with obstacles both during and after incarceration. The feminist ecological framework I proposed in Chapter Six established that many of the elements O'Brien identified do promote "successful" reintegration. For example, housing and employment played a pivotal role among the women who participated in both studies. However, this study also showed that many factors were missing in O'Brien's understanding of women's reintegration.

The framework I put forward expands on the work of O'Brien and other feminist researchers by including an ecological analysis of the impact that multiple systems have on women's experiences in jail and the community. By adopting an ecological model to explain and understand women's experiences within the provincial correctional system in Atlantic Canada, it becomes clear that in order to adequately address the needs of women,

individual, relational, environmental, *and* societal factors must be taken into account. A framework missing even one of these components falls short of presenting a complete picture of women's criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration experiences.

Furthermore, unless all four dimensions are addressed, women will continue to be criminalized for their economic, political, and social marginalization, experience gender inequalities within the correctional system, and face barriers upon returning to the community after being released from jail/prison.

The challenge, then, for feminist researchers and advocates is to find ways to generate and engage others in intervention and prevention strategies that address the individual, relational, environmental, and societal factors that marginalize women, contribute to their criminalization, and subsequently affect their incarceration and reintegration experiences. A fine balance that builds upon women's internal capacities and strengths, addresses the importance of relationships in women's lives, promotes positive connections with environmental settings, and eradicates the societal injustices women face is needed in any reintegration model for programming and practice developed to better support women. Creating such a support, however, is no easy feat. However, the feminist ecological reintegration and prevention framework I present offers various points of entry where society can start to make changes that better meet the needs of women in general and criminalized women (or those who are at risk) in particular.

The study's findings also have theoretical implications for community psychology. Community psychologists typically frame their understanding of human behaviour from an ecological epistemological standpoint. The ecological model is an important framework to help us understand how individuals are influenced by the environments in which they are

embedded. However, it fails to incorporate a gender-based analysis that identifies the ways in which these environments influence women and girls, men and boys (and diverse subsets of these groups) similarly and/or differently. The study's findings demonstrate the importance for community psychologists to engage in a more in-depth analysis to appreciate how gender shapes one's experiences within the multiple environments in which they are embedded. Specifically, this study showed that community psychologists need to consider the centrality of relationships in women's lives when they explore issues related to women.

By examining the incarceration and reintegration experiences of provincially sentenced women through an ecological gendered lens, this study demonstrates that women's criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration experiences parallel the larger systemic injustices that exist in society. For example, inequitable social policies and resources, the feminization of poverty, and violence against women and girls all contribute to women's marginalization and are exacerbated among criminalized women. The study draws attention to the importance of addressing the larger social inequalities that oppress women, otherwise the economic, political, and social situations of women, and in particular criminalized women, will remain the same. Community psychologists can make significant contributions to improving the lives of criminalized women by engaging in activities that promote social justice generally and the rights of women in particular.

Research

While feminist researchers have made substantial contributions to the literature in recent years, highlighting the unique needs and experiences of criminalized women, there is still much to be learned. In the Canadian context, as in other countries, researchers have largely

worked with male populations. While feminist (and non-feminist) literature is accumulating, we still know very little about the experiences of criminalized women in comparison to men. In addition, the majority of studies that have been carried out in Canada have concentrated on federally sentenced women and the policies, practices, and procedures of federal prisons. As a population, provincially sentenced women have been largely overlooked and the workings of the provincial correctional system remain relatively unknown. Furthermore, until recently, there was very little Canadian-based research on women's reintegration.

This study fills a gap in the literature by focusing its attention on the distinct experiences and needs of women in the provincial correctional system – from their standpoint. The demographic information collected provides important data detailing the personal backgrounds of women in the provincial system in Atlantic Canada, which is not easily accessible through Corrections statistics. Participants' stories provide a unique snapshot of the incarceration and reintegration experiences of women incarcerated within provincial jails across the Atlantic Region. This study is the first of its kind to conduct a systematic examination of the provincial correctional system in all four provinces, highlighting the dismal conditions women are subjected to within its walls and the lack of policies, practices, procedures within Atlantic jails. As well, the study brought attention to the enormous role that community-based organizations play in supporting women both on the inside and out across the Atlantic Region and the devastating consequences that transpire when such supports do not exist. Despite the challenges women experience, participants' stories also speak to the hope these women hold that changes can occur to better support women. The feminist ecological model I present not only illustrates the multiple needs of

women and the barriers they experience, but also lends itself to numerous intervention and prevention strategies that can address these issues and improve the lives of women. The model is the first of its kind to draw attention to the importance of addressing individual, relational, environmental, *and* societal influences. Merely addressing one, two, or three of these aspects will fail to adequately attend to the needs of criminalized women.

Although the study made significant contributions to the literature, like any other research, there are limitations. The study is based on the personal accounts of 32 women from across the Atlantic Region who have been incarcerated in provincial correctional facilities. Their subjective accounts are their own experiences, which may differ from those of other women in the region or in other parts of the country. However, there were many shared experiences among the women who participated in this study that provide a foundation from which future research can build. Time and geographical constraints, as well as few financial resources, limited my ability to conduct more than one interview with each participant. Being able to speak with women over time would have provided a larger window from which to learn even more about their experiences and engage in a more in-depth analysis. Another potential shortcoming of this study is that I often had to rely on correctional personnel to identify participants given tight security-measures and the distances of the jails from where I lived. It is possible that staff had a bias in who was selected to participate, limiting the breadth of experiences and personal histories of women who may have otherwise participated. In addition, despite purposefully sampling for women with diverse racial backgrounds, the intersections of gender, class, and race did not emerge from the data. The lack of experiences related to race, ethnicity, and culture may have been due to the fact that I am a “White” woman and participants may not have felt

comfortable speaking to me about the injustices they face as racialized women. My “Whiteness” may have also limited my ability to hear and recognize their stories.

Both the contributions and limitations of this study provide opportunities for future research. This study illustrates that while some experiences are shared, provincially sentenced women have their own unique experiences that differ from their female federal counterparts. More research is needed examining issues of criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration at the provincial level. As well, research needs to continue in the Atlantic Region as each province has distinct characteristics that influence the lives of women, which contribute to their social, economic, and political marginalization and subsequent criminalization. Furthermore, studies examining the experiences and needs of racialized women in the provincial correctional system are desperately needed. I am not aware of any studies from this region that specifically look at the criminalization and reintegration experiences of racialized women, including Aboriginal, Black, African Nova Scotian, as well as immigrant and refugee women. It would also be valuable to speak with service providers to gain greater insight into the challenges and “successes” they have experienced in supporting criminalized women.

Steps Forward

Prison Reform or Abolition?

The findings from this study show that the current policies, procedures, and practices of the provincial correctional system are failing to meet the needs of the women entangled within it. After listening to and reflecting on the stories of the women who participated in this study, I find myself deliberating between two ways of moving forward. One recommendation I can make is for correctional reform, the other is the abolition of provincial jails altogether. Both would provide more appropriate environments and supports for provincially sentenced women; one is likely to happen more quickly, while the other could take years, even decades to come to fruition.

The conditions in the provincial jails were so deplorable for the women incarcerated within them that I cannot help but call for reform within the provincial correctional system. While I do not support the incarceration of women, the reality is that jail is a dominant feature of society that is not going away any time soon. In fact, more jails will be built before they are dismantled. As such, I think it is imperative that changes to the provincial correctional system, such as those I recommended in the previous chapter, be implemented as soon as possible to better support women who find themselves entangled within it. The feminist ecological model I developed offers a comprehensive understanding of women's incarceration and reintegration experiences, including numerous ways in which their needs can be addressed from a gendered lens across multiple levels.

But what about long term goals for addressing underlying issues that result in the criminalization and incarceration of women living on the margins? The expansion of jails has become the favoured solution to the socio-economic problems our society faces (Davis,

2003), especially for marginalized women. Most of us do not question whether or not jails and prisons should exist. But, as more and more women are criminalized and incarcerated for crimes of survival it becomes increasingly important to ask ourselves whether it makes sense to lock away women who are merely trying to survive in a society where they are economically and politically marginalized. I would argue that for women in the provincial correctional system, jails do not make sense. As this study shows, there is little in place to help women address the individual, relational, environmental, and societal factors that led to their criminalization and subsequent incarceration. As Davis (2003) argues, the goal of rehabilitation has been replaced by incapacitation as the major objective of incarceration, resulting in more repressive conditions.

The experiences of the women who participated in this study show that their basic human rights are violated. Experiences of gender discriminatory practices within the provincial correctional system, such as small units, restricted movement, lack of access to the yard, and separation from children, infringe on the human rights of women. The major challenge then is visualizing and creating more humane and habitable alternatives to incarceration that do not reinforce the popular discourses from which current correctional policies, procedures, and practices are built (Davis, 2003).

But, why is it so challenging to imagine alternatives to our current correctional system? Davis (2003) argues that the current system with its intent focus on imprisonment is seen as an unconditional standard that obstructs us from envisioning other ways to deal with people. She encourages us to give up our usual way of thinking about punishment as the inevitable consequence of crime and instead imagine a collection of alternatives that aim to remove prisons from society altogether. These alternatives to imprisonment would include

a continuum of support focusing on free education and health services for all, employment opportunities and living wages, alternatives to welfare programs, community-based addiction programs, as well as address violence against women and systemic racism.

The findings from this study support the need for alternatives to incarceration. It was evident that women can be better supported in the community out of the confines of the criminal justice system. Although developing a design for alternatives to incarceration is outside the scope of this study, the findings point out numerous directions for moving away from incarceration towards a different way of thinking about dealing with individuals who are criminalized, largely for their marginalization. The feminist ecological framework for reintegration and prevention that I developed provides a guide for areas that need to be addressed on an individual, relational, environmental, and societal level, providing support for Davis's call for the need for a constellation of alternatives.

In moving forward then, I realize that we do not have to choose between reform and abolition. Both can be a reality. As we address the poor conditions of the current provincial jails and institute more policies, procedures, and practices that better support women, we can work towards creating alternatives to imprisonment at the same time.

Implications for Community Psychology

Why should community psychologists care about this study, and, more specifically criminalized women? First, this is a study about women and community psychology has long been critiqued for its inattentiveness to women and gender issues (Angelique & Culley, 2000, 2003). In addition, despite the fact that community psychology is recognized for working with marginalized groups, very little attention has been given to criminalized and imprisoned populations. Criminalized women are arguably one of the most

disadvantaged groups in society today and deserve the attention of community psychologists who have a lot to offer in terms of the values they espouse and their approaches to addressing inequalities to promote well-being.

Another reason why this study should garner the attention of community psychology and those who practice within it is that the sub-discipline has been criticized for not fully embracing feminist perspectives despite the obvious connection between the two fields (Bond et al., 2000; Bond & Mulvey, 2000; Hill, et al., 2000). The findings from this study demonstrate ways in which feminist concepts and analyses can easily be incorporated into community psychology practices. For example, the traditional ecological model adopted by many community psychologists is andro-centric. Very rarely are sex and gender brought into an analysis when trying to understand individual experiences within the multiple environments in which they are embedded. This study shows that not only is it important to understand individual experiences across multiple levels, but that it is also imperative to consider how women and men, boys and girls, may experience the phenomenon under study similarly or differently. By incorporating a sex- and gender-based analysis, and more specifically adopting a feminist ecological framework, community psychologists can very easily bring sex and gender to the forefront of their work.

Sex- and gender-based analysis is not only about examining issues from the standpoint of sex and gender. The framework also stresses the importance of paying attention to other social determinants of health, such as socio-economic status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, geographic location, education, and physical and mental ability – all of which interact to affect one's health and well-being (Clow et al., 2009). Without examining the diversity and complexities of people's lives, we fail to adequately account

for their experiences. As this study shows, women's experiences of criminalization, incarceration, and reintegration are inextricably linked by a host of biological and social aspects that shape their lives. For example, racialized women experience incarceration differently than Caucasian women. Similarly, lesbian women have distinctly different experiences than heterosexual women. The women who participated in this study who were mothers, experienced a different sense of dislocation from their families than women without children, because of the trauma they experienced as a result of being separated from their daughters and sons. Each of these aspects works to shape our lives and in order for community psychologists to gain an accurate understanding of people's experiences, all aspects of diversity must be incorporated at every level of analysis.

Not only does the feminist ecological framework I developed make an important contribution to the field of community psychology through its focus on sex, gender, and diversity, but it also draws attention to various ways in which community psychologists can work to prevent the future criminalization of marginalized populations. Prevention has long been at the heart of community psychology. The findings from this study show that preventive interventions must not only address individual factors, such as empowerment, but relational, environmental, and social aspects as well. By addressing the multiple aspects outlined in the feminist ecological framework of reintegration and prevention that I presented in Chapter Six, we can prevent individual women from being criminalized and subsequently imprisoned in the future, we can aim to reduce rates of criminalization and incarceration among groups of women and men, and by intentionally focusing on eliminating the social injustices marginalized populations experience altogether we can

work towards creating socially responsible alternatives to incarceration- eradicating the need for jails and prisons altogether.

Another way that this study connects with community psychology is through the need for both ameliorative interventions that aim to promote well-being and transformative interventions “concerned with the promotion of well-being, focus on changing power relationships and striving to eliminate oppression” (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 144). As discussed in the previous section, the findings promote the need for both ameliorative transformations within the correctional system itself to promote the well-being of those incarcerated within it, as well as transformative interventions that strive to change the system itself and the underlying assumptions upon which it is built. Furthermore, the findings call attention to the importance of eliminating societal systems of oppression and power inequalities to increase the well-being of women in general and in particular those women who are at an increased risk of being criminalized. For example, the feminization of poverty has resulted in few real opportunities for economic advancement among women. By examining the intersection of gender, race, and class within the globalization of poverty, community psychologists can work towards eradicating the systemic issues that lead to economic marginalization – one of the major contributing factors to the criminalization of women. Thus, providing a clear connection between subjects community psychologists have traditionally been concerned with (poverty) and a reason why they should be paying more attention to criminalized women as a population.

Final Thoughts

The women who participated in this project and the stories they shared touched my life in more ways than I will ever be able to express. When I started on this journey, I expected

that women's experiences of incarceration within the provincial correctional system would be dismal to say the least, but I was not prepared for the extent to which these women experienced overt displays of oppression and discrimination on the inside and as they made the difficult transition back to the community. No one can deny that incarceration and reintegration are extremely emotionally and physically trying, but what I think most people fail to realize is that the women (and men) who are forced to experience these environments are incredibly strong and courageous.

One of the ways in which I think that people can begin to understand what it is like to be incarcerated and then return to the community is to compare the experience to something they can actually envision experiencing. Most of us cannot begin to imagine what it is like to be confined for a period of time with all of our rights stripped from us and then be set "free" to the same environment that led to our criminalization in the first place, but we could more easily picture what it might be like to be forced to jump out of an airplane without a parachute. Hence, the title of my project, "It's like jumping out of a plane without a parachute." The title actually originates from a discussion I had with Jennifer, one of the women who participated in this study. In asking her to describe her ideal support for women exiting the provincial correctional system and returning to the community, she said:

"It would be like if you were jumping out of a plane and you have a parachute on... because when you are jumping out of a plane, you're scared and it's a whole different atmosphere and you need something that is going to be your lifeline or your parachute. It would be something that you have on your back for when you walk out those doors. It's a parachute that opens and kinda keeps you safe."

Since the day she said this to me, Jennifer's words have never left me. I have not been able to help but think that if more people understood just how terrifying and, often, life-threatening the experiences of incarceration and reintegration really are, they may have more compassion and respect for those forced to endure life on the inside and then reintegrate into society without support. Most of the women in this study did not have that lifeline that Jennifer talked about. Worse, their experiences of walking through those jail doors and returning to the community without the support they needed set them up to "fail." For many, it was like being forced to jump out of a plane without a parachute. Where my frustration lies and the question I am left asking is, do we not have a collective responsibility to keep women safe and to provide them the support they need to survive? My answer to this question is "yes" and the findings from this study show us many ways in which we can begin to support women, promoting equity, well-being, and a just society for all women.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Adult Correctional Services Custodial Admissions to Provincial, Territorial, and Federal Programs

	2001	2002	2003	2004
New Brunswick				
Total Sentenced	3,466	4,348	4,321	4,369
Sentenced	1,555	2,454	2,303	2,233
Sentenced Women (%)	6	8	9	9
Remand	1,337	1,358	1,469	1,543
Other Statutes	574	536	549	593
Newfoundland and Labrador				
Total Sentenced	1,750	1,675	1,713	1,583
Sentenced	1,235	1,148	1,174	1,045
Sentenced Women (%)	5	5	6	4
Remand	422	427	436	460
Other Statutes	93	100	103	78
Nova Scotia				
Total Sentenced	3,855	3,840	3,870	4,115
Sentenced	1,507	1,550	1,513	1,660
Sentenced Women (%)	6	7	7	8
Remand	1,881	1,949	2,081	2,171
Other Statutes	467	341	276	284
Prince Edward Island				
Total Sentenced	828	859	678	--
Sentenced	650	594	489	
Sentenced Women (%)	7	9	7	--
Remand	178	265	189	--
Other Statutes	0	--	--	--

Note: Total Sentenced/Sentenced/Remand/Other Statutes Includes Both Women and Men
 -- Data Not Available

Appendix 2- Sentence Lengths and Jail Terms of Participants

Participant	Sentence Length	First Time in Jail	Previous Provincial Jail Terms (#)	Previous Federal Jail Terms (#)
Ann	4 Months	Yes	N/A	N/A
April	7 Months	No	8	1
Babycakes	3 Months	No	1	0
Butterfly	8 Months	No	3	0
Candy	On Remand	No	1	2
Charlene	21 Days	No	12	0
Daisy	5 Years (Federal)	Yes	N/A	N/A
Ella	20 Months	No	2	0
Ellen	4 Months	No	4	0
Girly	6 Months	No	1	0
Hailey	3 Months + 15 Days	No	12	0
Happy Gilmore	4 Months	No	3	0
Jenna	4 Months	No	4	0
Jennifer	2 Months	No	1	0
Jess	6 Months	No	7	1
Jessica	2 Years – 1 Day	Yes	N/A	N/A
Jodi	2 Months	No	2	0
Jody	8 Months	No	5	0
Kelly	3 Months	No	4	0
Layla	10 Months +17 Days	No	3	0
Lauren	7 Months	No	2	3
Marge Simpson	1 Month + 15 Days	No	Multiple	Multiple
Marsha	3 Months	No	2	1
Mary	3 Months Remand + 1 Month + 15 Days	No	Multiple	0
Michelle	On Remand	No	25	1
Mother Goose	2 Years + 9 Months (Federal)	No	3	1
Sally	4 Months	No	1	0
Sam	3 Month Remand	No	2	0
Sug	7 Months	No	3	0
Summer	3 Months + 21 Days	No	3	0
Sunshine	8 Months Remand + 20 Days	Yes	N/A	N/A
Vicky	2 Years + 5 Months (Federal)	No	6	1

Appendix 3- Consent Form

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY- INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Reintegration Experiences of Provincially Sentenced Women in Atlantic Canada

Researcher: Jenn Bernier, PhD Candidate Community Psychology, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON

Advisors: Dr. Shoshana Pollack and Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by me as part of my community psychology doctoral thesis (Wilfrid Laurier University). The purpose of this study is to investigate the reintegration experiences of provincially sentenced women in Atlantic Canada, including the needs of women who are or have been incarcerated in provincial jails, supports available to women within the provincial jails, supports needed to assist women leaving jail, community conditions that impact reintegration, as well as policies that influence criminalized women from communities in Atlantic Canada. Examples of the types of questions you will be asked include: How did you prepare for your release? What was the experience of returning to the community like for you? What types of support systems do you have? What community supports and services are available to you? What advice would you give to women in similar situations? In your opinion, what would an appropriate service or support look like to assist women upon re-entry?

Information

You will be asked to participate in either a group or individual interview. There will be 4-6 women participating in each of the 2 focus groups and approximately 20 women being interviewed individually, resulting in a total of approximately 28-32 participants. At the beginning of the interview, you will be asked to fill out an information sheet that will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. After finishing the information sheet, you will participate in a 1-½ hour group or individual interview. With your permission the interviews will be audiotaped. I will be asking you to share your experience of being in jail, how you prepared for and feel about your release, the supports and services available to you, any challenges you faced or anticipate in returning to the community, any advice you would give to women in similar situations, as well as changes you would make to the provincial jail system. You will be compensated *insert how* (Note: To be inserted prior to printing depending on participant: Women in jail will receive a gift bag and those women living in the community will receive \$20) for sharing your experiences and time.

Confidentiality

Information from interviews will be kept private and confidential. Your participation is confidential. However, for women in jail, prison staff will know that you are meeting with me. Focus group participants will be asked to keep the information shared confidential, but I cannot guarantee they will do so. A co-facilitator may be present at the focus groups. The co-facilitator will keep all information confidential. Your name will not be used in any documents, presentations or publications that are produced from the data collected in this project, as I will be asking you to provide me with a “made-up” name. I will be using direct quotations from your interview. However, no identifying information will be used in the quotations. You also have the option of participating in this project without the use of direct quotations from your interview. Only I will have access to the audiotapes, and once they have been transcribed I will destroy the audiotapes. My advisors, Dr. Shoshana Pollack and Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers, and I will have access to the transcribed data. If I need further clarification or assistance, it is possible that I will share some of the data with my committee members, as well as my research advisory board, which is made up of individuals who have been criminalized. All data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet where only I will have access. The transcripts will be destroyed by paper shredding by September 2014.

Feedback and Publications

You will be given a copy of your transcribed interview so that you may look over it and make any changes you want (add something you forgot to mention or take out something that you do not want to be part of the interview). The information gathered will be used in my thesis, a participant summary, summary report for the larger community (e.g., agencies, government bodies, and service providers), conference presentations, and journal articles. The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, all Atlantic chapters of the Elizabeth Fry Society, Department of Justice (Department for Public Safety) in New Brunswick, Department of Justice (Community Corrections Branch) in Newfoundland & Labrador, Department of Justice (Correctional Services Division) in Nova Scotia, as well as the Office of the Attorney General (Community and Correctional Services) in Prince Edward Island are examples of agencies and organizations that will receive a copy of the summary report. The research findings will be summarized and made available by April 30th of 2007. If you wish to receive the participant summary and/or summary report, please record your address at the end of this form. Copies of the research summaries and final reports will also be made available through the local Elizabeth Fry Society Chapters in Atlantic Canada.

Risks

There is the potential of emotional risk in this research project. It is possible that your participation may bring back memories that you may have experienced in the past, which may cause some emotional discomfort. In the unlikely event that this will occur; you may identify any discomfort during the interview. You also have the right to not answer any question. Also, I will provide you with contact information for myself, as well as for your local chapter of the Elizabeth Fry Society, in case you would like to discuss your feelings with a professional or a staff member who works on a daily basis with criminalized women.

Benefits

Despite the potential risk, there are also benefits for participating in this project. The information you provide has the potential to contribute to our knowledge about the needs and experiences of provincially sentenced women. More specifically, contributing to an increased knowledge about the lived experiences of criminalized women released from provincial jails in Atlantic Canada. You will have the opportunity to have your experiences heard and sharing your story will contribute to a body of research that has the potential to make direct change for other women who may find themselves in similar circumstances. Furthermore, you will have the opportunity to share recommendations for policy and procedural changes within the provincial correctional system, as well as for improved supports and services within the community.

Contacts

Your participation in this project is *voluntary*, and you may decline to participate at any time without penalty. Your participation or non-participation will have no impact on your sentence, status in jail, or with the provincial correctional system. If you choose to withdraw from the study before the data collection is complete, your information will be destroyed and any benefits you received will not be influenced. This research project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University. If you have any ethical questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Dr. Bill Marr, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University at 884-1970 ext. 2468. If you have any questions about this research project, the procedures, or if you experience adverse affects as a result in participating in this project, you may contact my advisors or me at:

Jenn Bernier
Researcher
Department of Psychology
902-405-6628
bern0927@wlu.ca

Dr. Shoshana Pollack
Advisor
Faculty of Social Work
519-884-0710 ext. 2032
spollack@wlu.ca

Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers
Advisor
Department of Psychology
519-884-0710 ext. 3630
rwalshb@wlu.ca

Consent

I have read and understood all of the above information, acknowledge receiving a copy of this form, and agree to voluntarily participate. I understand that both the group and individual interviews will be audiotaped. Only the researcher will have access to the audiotapes. The audiotapes will be destroyed once they have been transcribed on paper. I understand that the researcher will be using direct quotations that do not identify me in any way in her written documents.

- I agree to participate.
 I agree to participate, but do not want any direct quotations from my interview being used.

Participant's Name (Please Print Clearly) _____
Participant's Signature _____

Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____

It is important that I have contact information for you so that I can give you your copy of the interview transcript. I may also need to contact you in the future for clarification. Please leave your phone number, email address if you have one, and your mailing address.

Phone Number: () _____

Email Address: _____

STREET NUMBER STREET NAME (APARTMENT #)

CITY PROVINCE POSTAL CODE

Would you like a copy of the summary report?

- Yes
 No

PLEASE KEEP THIS COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS.

Consent

I have read and understood all of the above information, acknowledge receiving a copy of this form, and agree to voluntarily participate. I understand that both the group and individual interviews will be audiotaped. Only the researcher will have access to the audiotapes. The audiotapes will be destroyed once they have been transcribed on paper. I understand that the researcher will be using direct quotations that do not identify me in any way in her written documents.

- I agree to participate.
 I agree to participate, but do not want any direct quotations from my interview being used.

Participant's Name (Please Print Clearly) _____

Participant's Signature _____

Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____

It is important that I have contact information for you so that I can give you your copy of the interview transcript. I may also need to contact you in the future for clarification. Please leave your phone number, email address if you have one, and your mailing address.

Phone Number: () _____

Email Address: _____

STREET NUMBER STREET NAME (APARTMENT #)

CITY PROVINCE POSTAL CODE

Would you like a copy of the summary report?

- Yes
 No

PLEASE GIVE THIS SIGNED COPY TO THE RESEARCHER

Appendix 4- Incarcerated Women Focus Group Interview Guide

In this section I am going to ask you questions about your reintegration experiences prior to your current jail term.

1. Please tell me about your experience of returning to the community after being in jail the last time.
 - a. What was the experience like?
 - b. How did you feel?
 - c. Did you get the support you needed? Please explain.
 - d. What support systems did you have when you were released from jail (e.g., family, religion, community, social services)?
 - e. List or describe anything that you would have liked to have had made available to you when you returned to your community.
2. Are you planning to go back to the same community you lived in before your current jail term? Please explain.
3. What do you think contributed to you coming into contact with the law again after being released from jail?
4. Knowing what you know now, would you have done anything differently when you got out of jail last time? Please explain.
5. Knowing what you know now, are you going to do anything differently when you are released from jail this time? Please explain.

In this section I am going to ask you questions about returning to the community when your current jail term is finished.

6. Please describe any supports or programs currently available to you in jail?
 - a. Are these programs run by Corrections?
 - b. Are you participating in or receiving any of the supports, services, and/or programs you just told me about?
 - c. Of the programs and services you are participating in, which do you think will help you on the outside once you are released? Please explain.
 - d. Were these supports available to you when you were in jail the last time?
 - e. Did you use these supports and programs last time?

7. How are you preparing for your release this time?
 - a. Do you have or are you working on a release plan? Please describe.
 - b. Is there someone who comes in to talk to you (or do an assessment) when you are getting ready to leave?
 - c. Are you working with someone to help connect you to resources, programming, and supports in the community you will be living in once you are released? Please explain.
 - d. Based on your past experiences, what do you require assistance with in order to increase your chances of successful reintegration (e.g., employment, housing, social assistance, etc.)?
8. How are you feeling about returning to the community this time?
9. What are you looking forward to in the future/after you are released?
10. What might help support you when return to the community?
11. What kind of community supports do you know of to assist you upon release? Do you plan on using any of these supports?
12. What are some of the challenges you think you might face when returning to your community?
 - a. Are these challenges different from the ones you experienced the first time?
13. What do you believe might help you stay away from coming into conflict with the law again?
14. What advice would you give other women who might be in a similar situation?
15. In your opinion, what would a successful service or program designed to assist women upon re-entry look like?
 - a. What would be the necessary features, characteristics, or key ingredients?
 - b. By whom and where would it be offered?

We are at the end of the interview, but there may have some important questions or topics I did not cover. Is there anything you would like to say or tell me about?

Appendix 5-Incarcerated Women Individual Interview Guide

In this section I am going to ask you questions about your reintegration experiences prior to your current jail term.

1. Please tell me about your experience of returning to the community after being in jail the last time.
 - c. What was the experience like?
 - d. How did you feel?
 - e. Did you get the support you needed? Please explain.
 - f. What support systems did you have when you were released from jail (e.g., family, religion, community, social services)?
 - g. List or describe anything that you would have liked to have had made available to you when you returned to your community.
2. Are you planning to go back to the same community you lived in before your current jail term? Please explain.
3. What do you think contributed to you coming into contact with the law again after being released from jail?
4. Knowing what you know now, would you have done anything differently when you got out of jail last time? Please explain.
5. Knowing what you know now, are you going to do anything differently when you are released from jail this time? Please explain.

In this section I am going to ask you questions related to your preparation for returning to the community when your current jail term is finished.

6. Please describe any supports or programs currently available to you in jail?
 - a. Are these programs run by Corrections?
 - b. Are you participating in or receiving any of the supports, services, and/or programs you just told me about?
 - c. Of the programs and services you are participating in, which do you think will help you on the outside once you are released? Please explain.
 - d. Were these supports available to you when you were in jail the last time?
 - e. Did you use these supports and programs last time?

7. How are you preparing for your release this time?
 - a. Do you have or are you working on a release plan? Please describe.
 - b. Is there someone who comes in to talk to you (or do an assessment) when you are getting ready to leave?
 - c. Are you working with someone to help connect you to resources, programming, and supports in the community you will be living in once you are released? Please explain.
 - d. Based on your past experiences, what do you require assistance with in order to increase your chances of successful reintegration (e.g., employment, housing, social assistance, etc.)?
8. How are you feeling about returning to the community this time?
9. What are you looking forward to in the future/after you are released?
10. What might help support you when return to the community?
11. Can you tell me about any community supports you know of that could assist you upon release?
 - a. Do you plan on using any of these supports? Why or Why not?
12. What are some of the challenges you think you might face when returning to your community this time?
 - a. Are these challenges different from the ones you experienced the first time?
 - b. Can you tell me about any experiences you've had with stigma?
13. What do you believe might help you stay away from coming into conflict with the law again?
14. Based on your experience of being released and returning to jail, what advice would you give to other women returning to the community?
15. In your opinion, what would a successful service or program designed to assist women upon re-entry look like?
 - a. What would be the necessary features, characteristics, or key ingredients?
 - b. By whom and where would it be offered?
 - c. What are your thoughts on peer support?

We are at the end of the interview, but there may have some important questions or topics I did not cover. Is there anything you would like to say or tell me about?

Appendix 6-Women in the Community Individual Interview Guide

In this section I am going to ask you questions that have to do with when you were in jail.

1. Were there any supports or programs available to you when you were in jail (excluding those offered by Coverdale or EFry)?
 - a. Were they run by Corrections?
 - b. Of the supports and programs you just mentioned, which ones did you participate in while you were in jail?
 - c. Can you tell me about the programs or services you participated in that you believe have helped you now that you are back in the community?
2. Please share with me how you were feeling about leaving jail?
 - a. Can you tell me about what you were you looking forward to?
 - b. What you were not looking forward to?
3. How did you prepare for your release?
 - a. Did you have a release plan? Please explain.
 - b. Is there someone who comes in to talk to you to do an assessment when you are getting ready to leave?
 - c. Was someone there to help connect you with available resources and supports in the community you were returning to upon release? Please explain.

In this section I am going to ask you questions about your reintegration experiences thus far.

4. What was the release-process like for you?
5. Please share with me what it has been like for you since returning to the community.
6. Can you tell me about the types of things you needed when you left the jail (e.g., clothing, food, employment, housing, social assistance)?
 - a. What did you need ?
 - b. Did you need help getting the things you needed?
 - c. Did you get that help?
7. Now that you are in the community is there anything you still need help with?

8. Please describe any supports, services, and/or programs you have used since leaving jail.
 - a. Are there any supports, services, and/or programs you are currently using?
 - b. Were there more supports available to you when you were on probation or parole?
 - c. Are there supports available to you after your warrant expiry?
9. Are there any supports that you wish were available to you?
10. Please tell me about any challenges you have faced since leaving jail.
 - a. How did you deal with those challenges?
 - b. Would you have dealt with those challenges in a different way if you could have accessed help from service providers (or someone) in the community?
 - c. What kind of supports would need to be available to you in order to deal with these challenges in a positive manner?
11. What do you believe might help you stay away from coming into conflict with the law again?
12. What advice would you give other women who are in jail and preparing to go back into the community?
 - a. What advice would you give to other women who have recently returned to the community?
 - b. Can you tell me about any experiences you've had with stigma?
13. In your opinion, what would a successful service or program designed to assist women upon re-entry look like?
 - a. What would be the necessary features, characteristics, or key ingredients?
 - b. By whom and where would it be offered?
 - c. What are your thoughts on peer support:?
14. Would you be interesting in being a part of creating such a program?

We are at the end of the interview, but there may have some important questions or topics I did not cover. Is there anything you would like to say or talk about?

Appendix 7- Participant Information Sheet

Please write a “made-up” name you would like me to use (it cannot be your real name, nickname, street name, or any other name someone knows you by): _____

1. What is your date of birth? Day _____ Month _____ Year _____
2. Where were you born? Town/Village/City _____ Province _____
If born outside of Canada, please write the name of country _____
3. Name of the last town/village/city you were living in before going to jail: _____
4. Name of town/village/city returning or returned to after jail (if known): _____
5. Do you identify as (check the box(es) that apply):
 - White
 - Aboriginal
 - Black
 - Hispanic
 - Francophone
 - I would like to identify as: _____
6. What is the highest level of school you completed: _____
7. What is your current relationship status (check the box(es) that apply):
 - Single
 - Common Law
 - Married (to a woman)
 - Married (to a man)
 - Widowed
 - Divorced or Separated
 - In a Relationship (with a woman)
 - In a Relationship (with a man)
 - I would like to identify as: _____
8. Do you have children? Yes No
If yes, how many children do you have? _____
How old is each child? _____
9. Were your children living with you before you went to jail? Yes No
10. Who is (was) looking after your children while you are in jail? _____

11. If you are currently living in the community, are your children living with you at this time?

Yes No

If no, where and with whom are your children living? _____

12. What was your source of income before going to jail?

Employment If yes, what type of job(s) did you have? _____

Social Assistance

13. What were you charged with this time? _____

14. What is the length of your current sentence? _____

15. Is this your first time in jail? Yes No

If no, how many times have you been in jail? **Provincial** _____ **Federal** _____

16. How long were you out before coming into jail this time? _____

17. What is your expected release date? _____

Call for Participants in a Research Study of the Reintegration Experiences of Provincially Sentenced Women in Atlantic Canada!

I am looking for women to participant in a study on the reintegration experiences of provincially sentenced women in Atlantic Canada. To participate, you must have served a provincial sentence in a jail in Atlantic Canada and are now living in the community.

I would like to know more about the following questions: What are the needs of provincially sentenced women? What supports are available to women both in provincial jails and in the community? What challenges do women face upon release? What would a successful service or program designed to assist women upon re-entry look like?

You will be asked to participate in an individual interview that is approximately 1.5 hours in length. Responses will be kept confidential and you will be paid \$20 for sharing your time and expertise.

**I would very much appreciate your assistance in recruiting participants!
If you know someone who may be appropriate for this study, please ask them to contact:**

**Jennifer
(902) 405-6628
Email: bern0927@wlu.ca**

Call for Participants in a Research Study of the Reintegration Experiences of Provincially Sentenced Women in Atlantic Canada!

I am looking for women to participant in a study on the reintegration experiences of provincially sentenced women in Atlantic Canada. To participate, you must currently be in a provincial jail in Atlantic Canada and have had at least one previous jail term.

I would like to know more about the following questions: What are the needs of provincially sentenced women? What supports are available to women both in provincial jails and in the community? What challenges do women face upon release? What would a successful service or program designed to assist women upon re-entry look like?

I am looking for women who are interested in participating in an individual interview. The interview will be approximately 1 to 1.5 hours in length. Responses will be kept confidential and you will be given a gift bag as a token of my appreciation for sharing your time and expertise.

If you are interested in participating please let staff know or you may contact me at:

**Jennifer
(902) 405-6628
Email: bern0927@wlu.ca**

Appendix 10- Initial Codes

NVivo revision 2.0.163
Project: PSW Reintegration User: Bernier
Date: 04/04/2006 12:46:30 PM
NODE LISTING Number of Nodes: 202

1 Acknowledging Root of Pblm	37 Dealing w Probation	66 Feelings About Getting Out of Jail
2 Actively Ps in Pgms	38 Describing Exp at Prev Jails	67 Feelings and Hopes About Future
3 Adapting 2 Jail	39 Describing Jail Practices	68 Feelings of Guilt
4 Addiction Treatment	40 Describing the K9 Pgm at NOVA	69 Feelings of Hopelessness
5 Adjusting 2 Life on the Outside	41 Devaluing Beliefs	70 Feelings of Humiliation Degradation
6 Advice 2 Other Women	42 Doing it on My Own	71 Feelings of Isolation
7 Always Being Watched	43 Doing Things Differently This Time	72 Feelings of Shame
8 Being a woman	44 Envisioning Ideal Support	73 Forgiving Yourself
9 Being Able 2 Use Skills	45 Experiencing Discrimination	74 Getting Back on Your Feet
10 Being Assaulted While Incarc	46 Experiencing Hunger	75 Going Back 2 the Cmty
11 Being Incarc w Men	47 Experiencing Jail Diff Than Men	76 Going 2 Cmty Not Near Jails
12 Being Labelled as Bad	48 Experiencing Lack of Trust w Guard	77 Halfway Houses
13 Being Labelled in General	49 Explaining Past Cmty Support Inside	78 Having a Criminal Record
14 Being on Methadone	50 Explaining Past Support Inside	79 Having 1 Person Believing in U
15 Being on Remand	51 Explaining Pres Cmty Support Inside	80 Having Positive Influences
16 Being Responsible 4 Setting up Supports	52 Facing Challenges	81 Having Something 2 Look Forward 2
17 Being Sentenced	53 Facing Same Lifestyle After Release	82 Having 2 do it Yourself
18 Being Shipped Around Jails	54 Feeling Angry	83 Having 2 Prove Myself
19 Being Sick	55 Feeling Disrespected	84 Having Name in Media
20 Being Strong	56 Feeling Down on Yourself	85 Health Care in Jail
21 Being Treated As Worthless	57 Feeling Good About Myself	86 Hearing Neg Things
22 Being Watched	58 Feeling Happy or Excited	87 Identifying Addictions
23 Believing in Yourself	59 Feeling Institutionalized	88 Identifying as an old Inmate
24 Believing What Others Tell U	60 Feeling Judged	89 Identifying Jail Enviro
25 Blaming Yourself	61 Feeling Rejected	90 Identifying Skills Learned Inside
26 Blocking Emotions	62 Feeling Sad or Dep	91 Identifying Support Sys
27 Bullying	63 Feeling Scared	92 Inability 2 Communicate w Guards
28 Children	64 Feeling Stressed Anxious Nervous	93 Influence of Male Partner
29 Coming in Younger	65 Feeling Threatened	94 Issues Related 2 Paperwork
30 Committing Crime		95 Issues Surr Education
31 Dealing w a lot Mentally		96 Issues Surr Employment
32 Dealing w Challenges		
33 Dealing w Loss		
34 Dealing w Addiction		
35 Dealing w Non Crm Lifestyle		
36 Dealing w Past		

97 Issues Surr Family
 98 Issues Surr Friends
 99 Issues Surr Housing
 100 Issues Surr Human Rights
 101 Issues Surr Lock Up
 102 Issues Surr Money
 103 Issues Surr Shelters
 104 Issues Surr Social Assistance
 105 Jail as a Sense of Security
 106 Jail Not Correcting Us
 107 Keeping Connected w Support
 108 Keeping In Touch w Ppl Outside
 109 Knowing What I Want
 110 Knowing What Takes Not 2 Come Back
 111 Knowing Where 2 Get Help
 112 Lacking Confidentiality
 113 Lacking Cmty Resources
 114 Lacking Self-Esteem
 115 Lacking Support in Cmty
 116 Lacking Support in Jail
 117 Leaving w Nothing
 118 Leaving Worse Off
 119 Level of Security
 120 Living Situations upon Release
 121 Looking at Things Differently
 122 Losing my freedom
 123 Making a Mistake
 124 Making My Own Decisions
 125 Mental Health
 126 Monkey on My Back
 127 More Things 4 Men
 128 Moving on w Life
 129 Needing Clothing
 130 Needing Continuity in Treatment
 131 Needing Cmty Support
 132 Needing Reintegration Assist
 133 Never Wanting This 4 Yourself
 134 No Release Preparation
 135 Nobody Cares
 136 Nobody Knows What Goes On
 137 Not Able 2 Get Out of Sys
 138 Not Being Able 2 Get on Methadone
 139 Not Being Taken Seriously
 140 Not Coming Back 2 Jail
 141 Not Getting the Help I Needed
 142 Not Having a Voice
 143 Not Having Privacy
 144 Not Having Someone 2 Talk 2
 145 Not Having 2 Worry About Anything
 146 Not Knowing What 2 Expect
 147 Not Knowing What Help is Out There
 148 Not Needing Help When Get Out
 149 Not Wanting 2B in Jail
 150 Not Wanting Go Back 2 Same Cmty
 151 Not Wanting Rules on Outside
 152 Nothing Different
 153 Pleading Guilty When Not
 154 Power Trip
 155 Preparing 4 Release
 156 Pgm as Cond 4 Release
 157 Pgm on the Inside
 158 Pgm on the Outside
 159 Putting Up Barriers 4 Help
 160 Quotes 4 Thesis
 161 Reaching out 4 Avail Help
 162 Recommendations
 163 Reflecting on Corr Sys
 164 Reflecting on Prov Sys
 165 Rels with Corr Staff
 166 Rels with Other Women
 167 Release Exps
 168 Reliving Painful Release Exps
 169 Remembering Painful Crime Exps
 170 Returning Back 2 the Cmty
 171 Risk
 172 Seeing Jail as Alt 2 Being Alone
 173 Seeing Jail as Housing Facility
 174 Seeing Jail as Punishment
 175 Sense of Security
 176 Sharing My Story
 177 Shortcomings w Current Pgm in Jail
 178 Showing Emotion
 179 Spirituality
 180 Standing Up 4 My Rights
 181 Staying Away from Sys
 182 Staying til Stat Release
 183 Stigma
 184 Taking Resp 4 Actions
 185 Can't Get any Worse
 186 Trying 2 Have Material Goods
 187 Trying 2 Make Phone Calls
 188 Trying 2 Set up Pgm in Cmty
 189 Vicious Cycle
 190 Viewing Federal as Better Alt
 191 Wanting 2B Part of Society
 192 Wanting 2B Treated Like a Person
 193 Wanting Human Compassion
 194 Wanting 1on1 Counsel
 195 Wanting Peer Support
 196 Wanting Change
 197 Wanting Somewhere 2 Go
 198 Wanting 2 Feel Safe
 199 Wanting Treatment
 200 Wanting Us 2 Suffer
 201 What Do I Have 2 Do
 202 Yard

Appendix 11- Example of Thematic Groupings

NVivo revision 2.0.163

Project: PSW Reintegration User: Bernier

Date: 26/05/2006 11:01:04 AM

NODE LISTING Number of Nodes: 134

- 1 Addiction Leading to Criminalization
- 2 Pleading Up
- 3 Quotes to Use in Thesis
- 4 Recommendations 4 Change
- 5 Recommendations 4 Change/Envisioning Ideal Support 4 Criminalized Women
- 6 Recommendations 4 Change/Recommendations 4 Changes in Jail
- 7 Recommendations 4 Change/Recommendations 4 Changes in Jail/More Meaningful Programming
- 8 Recommendations 4 Change/Recommendations 4 Changes in Jail/Sensitive Staff
- 9 Recommendations 4 Change/Recommendations 4 Changes in Jail/Release Support
- 10 Recommendations 4 Change/Recommendations 4 Changes in Cmty
- 11 Recommendations 4 Change/Recommendations 4 Changes in Cmty/Supportive Housing Options
- 12 Recommendations 4 Change/Recommendations 4 Changes in Cmty/Ideas for Cmty Programming
- 13 Recommendations 4 Change/Recommendations 4 Changes in Cmty/Wanting Peer Support
- 14 Exps of Incarceration
- 15 Exps of Incarceration/Describing Life on the Inside
- 16 Exps of Incarceration/Describing Life on the Inside/A Safe Place
- 17 Exps of Incarceration/Describing Life on the Inside/Having Everyday Things Taken 4m U
- 18 Exps of Incarceration/Describing Life on the Inside/Unhealthy Environment
- 19 Exps of Incarceration/Describing Life on the Inside/Dehumanizing
- 20 Exps of Incarceration/Describing Life on the Inside/Coming in Younger
- 21 Exps of Incarceration/Describing Life on the Inside/Being Humiliated and Degraded
- 22 Exps of Incarceration/Being Isolated
- 23 Exps of Incarceration/Being Isolated/Visitation Not Really An Option
- 24 Exps of Incarceration/Being Isolated/Hassels with Phone Calls
- 25 Exps of Incarceration/Being Isolated/Nobody For Me 2 Talk 2
- 26 Exps of Incarceration/Being Isolated/Being Seperated from Kids
- 27 Exps of Incarceration/Being Incarcerated with Men
- 28 Exps of Incarceration/Taking Responsibility for Actions
- 29 Exps of Incarceration/Being Watched
- 30 Exps of Incarceration/Being Shipped Around
- 31 Exps of Incarceration/Wanting Jail 2 Provide Help Pgm Treatreatment

- 32 Exps of Incarceration/Being Locked Up
- 33 Exps of Incarceration/Anywhere But Jail
- 34 Exps of Incarceration/Anywhere But Jail/Never Wanting This For Yourself
- 35 Exps of Incarceration/Anywhere But Jail/Wanting Personal Change
- 36 Exps of Incarceration/Not Getting Outside
- 37 Exps of Incarceration/Relationship with Corr Staff
- 38 Exps of Incarceration/Relationship with Corr Staff/Some Care
- 39 Exps of Incarceration/Relationship with Corr Staff/Throwing Around Their Power
- 40 Exps of Incarceration/Relationship with Corr Staff/Can't Create A Bond
- 41 Exps of Incarceration/Relationship with Corr Staff/Can't Create A Bond/Lacking Respect
- 42 Exps of Incarceration/Relationship with Corr Staff/Can't Create A Bond/Being Treated As Worthless
- 43 Exps of Incarceration/Relationship with Corr Staff/Can't Create A Bond/Lacking Trust
- 44 Exps of Incarceration/Relationship with Corr Staff/Can't Create A Bond/Not in it 2 Help
- 45 Exps of Incarceration/Relationship with Corr Staff/Can't Create A Bond/Lacking Confidentiality
- 46 Exps of Incarceration/Varying Rels with Other Women
- 47 Exps of Incarceration/Varying Rels with Other Women/Women as a Support
- 48 Exps of Incarceration/Varying Rels with Other Women/Not Socializing w the Women
- 49 Exps of Incarceration/Varying Rels with Other Women/Contention and Conflict
- 50 Exps of Incarceration/Having My Basic Rights Violated
- 51 Exps of Incarceration/Focusing on Punishment and Security
- 52 Exps of Incarceration/Becoming Institutionalized
- 53 Exps of Incarceration/Facing My Past in Jail
- 54 Programming in Jail
- 55 Programming in Jail/Actively Participate in Avail Pgms
- 56 Programming in Jail/Progammig by Cmty Organizations
- 57 Programming in Jail/Progammig by Cmty Organizations/NA and AA
- 58 Programming in Jail/Lacking Programming in Jail
- 59 Programming in Jail/Lacking Programming in Jail/Missing Programming
- 60 Programming in Jail/Lacking Programming in Jail/Lacking Programming in General
- 61 Programming in Jail/Lacking Programming in Jail/Lacking Addictions Treatment
- 62 Programming in Jail/Lacking Programming in Jail/Lacking Addictions Treatment/Difficulties Surrounding Methadone
- 63 Programming in Jail/Lacking Programming in Jail/Lacking Meaningful One on One Counsel
- 64 Programming in Jail/Lacking Programming in Jail/Not Acknowledging Root of Problem
- 65 Programming in Jail/Lacking Programming in Jail/Lacking Mental Health Services
- 66 Programming in Jail/Programming Provided by Jail
- 67 Programming in Jail/Programming Provided by Jail/Caseworker

- 68 Programming in Jail/Programming Provided by Jail/Education
- 69 Programming in Jail/Programming Provided by Jail/Exercise
- 70 Programming in Jail/Programming Provided by Jail/Unpaid Jobs
- 71 Programming in Jail/Programming Provided by Jail/Courses
- 72 Programming in Jail/Programming Provided by Jail/Counselling
- 73 Programming in Jail/Programming Provided by Jail/WOSAP
- 74 Programming in Jail/Programming Provided by Jail/Shortcomings w Current Pgm in Jail
- 75 Programming in Jail/Programming Provided by Jail/Not Allowed Pgm on Remand
- 76 Programming in Jail/Programming Provided by Jail/Health Care on the Inside
- 77 Leaving Jail
- 78 Leaving Jail/Leaving with Nothing
- 79 Leaving Jail/Not Being Weaned Off Meds B4 Leaving
- 80 Leaving Jail/Getting a Bus Ticket
- 81 Leaving Jail/Impersonal Exps
- 82 Leaving Jail/Feelings About Getting Out of Jail
- 83 Leaving Jail/Feelings About Getting Out of Jail/Feeling Okay About It
- 84 Leaving Jail/Feelings About Getting Out of Jail/Feelings of Hopelessness
- 85 Leaving Jail/Feelings About Getting Out of Jail/Looking Forward 2 Going Home
- 86 Leaving Jail/Feelings About Getting Out of Jail/Feeling Scared
- 87 Leaving Jail/Feelings About Getting Out of Jail/Feeling Alone
- 88 Leaving Jail/Feelings About Getting Out of Jail/Feeling Happy or Excited
- 89 Leaving Jail/Feelings About Getting Out of Jail/Feeling Stressed Anxious Nervous
- 90 Preparing for Release
- 91 Preparing for Release/No Release Preparation
- 92 Preparing for Release/Preparing for Release
- 93 Preparing for Release/Preparing for Release/Being Resp for Setting up Supports
- 94 Reintegration Exps
- 95 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges
- 96 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Having to Get a New Social Network
- 97 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Lacking Family Support
- 98 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Lacking Adequate Addictions Treatment
- 99 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Being Institutionalized
- 100 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Not Knowing What Help is Out There
- 101 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Lacking Supports Pgms in Cmty
- 102 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Fighting Addiction
- 103 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Not Getting the Help Needed
- 104 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Adjusting to Life on the Outside

- 105 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Feeling the Stigma
- 106 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Feeling the Stigma/Having Your Name in Media
- 107 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Feelings of Isolation in Cmty
- 108 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Not Being Able to Get on Methadone
- 109 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Financial Insecurity
- 110 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Can't Survive on Social Assistance
- 111 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Dealing with Social Services
- 112 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Getting Employment is Difficult
- 113 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Getting Employment is Difficult/Having A Criminal Record
- 114 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Getting Employment is Difficult/Would Like 2B Working
- 115 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Limited Housing Options
- 116 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Limited Housing Options/Having Nowhere 2 Go
- 117 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Limited Housing Options/Housing Options Not Safe Enviro
- 118 Reintegration Exps/Facing Challenges/Feeling Shame in the Cmty
- 119 Reintegration Exps/Elements for Success
- 120 Reintegration Exps/Elements for Success/Having Family Support
- 121 Reintegration Exps/Elements for Success/Accessing Programming in the Cmty
- 122 Reintegration Exps/Elements for Success/Accessing Programming in the Cmty/Getting Connected w Addictions Support
- 123 Reintegration Exps/Elements for Success/Accessing Programming in the Cmty/Getting Connected w Addictions Su/Accessing Methadone
- 124 Reintegration Exps /Elements for Success/Accessing Programming in the Cmty/ Employment Programming
- 125 Reintegration Exps/Elements for Success/Accessing Programming in the Cmty/Assisting w Housing
- 126 Reintegration Exps/Elements for Success/Accessing Programming in the Cmty/Linking w Educational Programs
- 127 Reintegration Exps/Elements for Success/Having One Person Believing in U
- 128 Reintegration Exps/Elements for Success/Keeping the Faith
- 129 Reintegration Exps/Elements for Success/Making My Own Decisions
- 130 Reintegration Exps/Elements for Success/Staying Strong & Believe in Yourself
- 131 Reintegration Exps/Elements for Success/Having Cmty Supports in Place
- 132 Reintegration Exps/Dealing with Probation
- 133 Reintegration Exps/Never Wanting 2 Go Back 2 Jail

Appendix 12- Example of Sub-Categories within a General Category

General Category: Experiences of Incarceration

Sub-Category: Anywhere But Here

- Never Wanting this for Yourself
- Wanting Personal Change

Sub-Category: Becoming Institutionalized

Sub-Category: Being Incarcerated with Men

Sub-Category: Being Isolated

- Being Separated from Children
- Hassles with Phone Calls
- Nobody for Me to Talk too
- Visitation Not Really an Option

Sub-Category: Being Locked Up

Sub-Category: Being Shipped Around

Sub-Category: Being Watched

Sub-Category: Describing Life on the Inside

- A Safe Place
- Being Humiliated and Degraded
- Coming in Younger
- Dehumanizing
- Having Everyday Things Taken from You
- Unhealthy Environment

Sub-Category: Facing My Past in Jail

Sub-Category: Focusing on Punishment and Security

Sub-Category: Having My Basic Rights Violated

Sub-Category: Not Getting Outside

Sub-Category: Varying Relationships with Correctional Staff

- Can't Create a Bond
 - Being Treated as Worthless
 - Lacking Confidentiality
 - Lacking Respect
 - Lacking Trust
 - Not in it to Help
- Some Care
- Throwing Around Their Power

Sub-Category: Taking Responsibility for Actions

Sub-Category: Varying Relationships with Other Women

- Contention and Conflict
- Not Socializing with the Women
- Women as a Support

Sub-Category: Wanting Jail to Provide Support

Experiences of Incarceration

1. Being Isolated

- The location of the facilities made it difficult for the women to receive family visits
- The design of the facilities made it difficult to have visits even if the women were able to have their families come visit them (e.g., not enough space, no family room)
- Phone call restrictions and the women having to pay for call themselves make it difficult for them to keep in contact with their families or to set up community supports
- Women find it extremely difficult to be separated from their children
- Women had nobody they could talk to while incarcerated

2. Being Incarcerated with Men

Women are smaller in number so:

- Staff not sensitive/aware of women's issues
- Women not allowed to associate with male inmates
- Being incarcerated in same institution with men restricts women's movement (e.g., women on remand are not allowed to be with men, therefore, they must stay on the unit)
- Men have more space, greater access to programming, and more movement
- A lot of programming women did receive was co-ed

3. Being Watched (Surveillance)

- Women feel they are always being watched
- Cameras in cells (can be seen when using washroom)

4. Being Locked-Up

- Women are being locked-up for long periods of time
- Women who show emotions or who have mental health issues are repeatedly locked-up
- Staff use lock-up as a control mechanism (threaten it to control women's behaviour)
- Used as a tool for keeping women separated and unable to interact with each other

5. Being Shipped Around

- When numbers get large (near capacity), women are shipped off to different jails
- Women experience unwanted transfers to other jails

6. Not Getting Outside

- Even though yard is mandatory, women are not getting outside (small cement/security fenced area) for their allotted time everyday
 - Staff don't take them out if they don't want to
 - All women have to go or no one gets to go outside
 - Sometimes women aren't getting out for several weeks in a row

7. Relationship with Correctional Staff

- There were a small number of guards whom the women believed were there to help them and as a result felt comfortable talking with them
- For the most part, the women felt that the guards weren't there for the right reasons, treated them with disrespect, as worthless, and did not keep things in confidence. This created a lack of trust among the women with the guards and made them feel as though they could not develop any kind of bond with them
- The guards continually abused their position power

8. Focusing on Punishment and Security

- Women felt they were there to be punished and therefore not given the help they needed
- Overuse of security in the provincial jails (e.g., one is designed off of super-max in USA)

9. Becoming Institutionalized

- The women acknowledged the fact that they become institutionalized in jail

10. Facing My Past

- Being in jail provides women with the opportunity to think about and deal with their past

11. Having My Basic Rights Violated

- Women talk about having their rights taken away from them, not knowing what their rights were while incarcerated, and experiences of trying to stand up for their rights.

12. Varying Relationships with Other Women

- For many of the women, the other women were a huge support system and they developed bonds with some of the women they were confined with

- Some women secluded themselves and did not associate with the other women at all
- Women talked about the contentions and conflict that arose as a result of a number of women being confined in a small area

13. Describing Life on the Inside

- Women talked about being stripped of everyday things/choices that people have on the outside
- Overall the women described the jails as unhealthy environments that affected both their mental and physical well-being
- Ironically, many women identified jail as being a safe place
- Women said that being incarcerated was a dehumanizing experience were they were they were often treated like children or animals
- Women talk about experiences of humiliation, being degraded, and stripped of their dignity
- Women found that more and more younger girls were becoming involved with the provincial system

14. Wanting Jail to Provide Help/Programming/Treatment

- Women were asking (begging) for help while incarcerated (wanted programming, access to addiction treatment, counselling)
- Cries for help were repeatedly ignored
- Believed that other people felt that they didn't want the help, didn't want to change, or that they did not deserve help because they were "criminals"

15. Anywhere But Jail

- Never wanted to be involved in crime or be in jail
- Nobody wanted to be in jail or go back to jail (not the kind of life they chose for themselves)
- Wanted to get out of the system
- The women talked about making changes in their lives (or wanting to)
- Being in jail allowed women the opportunity to think about what they wanted out of life

16. Taking Responsibility for My Action

- Women are blaming themselves for their criminalization (individualized the behaviour)
- Take responsibility for their actions
- Believe that nobody is to blame but themselves
- Deserve to be punished for their behaviour
- Want help now while incarcerated

Appendix 15- Example of a Journal Entry

Reflections: First Focus Grp.

Saint John Correctional Centre Apr. 14/06 5B

- want someone to listen to their stories.
- real sense of hopelessness
- feel like there is no one who wants to help them
- nothing in the prog. sys to help them
- wish they had support for when they get out
- want to be treated w respect
- no drug treatment
- may get "jobs" @ jail, but not paid
- come out w nothing so how R they suppose to make it
- resort back to same lifestyle b/c of alternatives

- didn't get a good glimpse of jail conditions
- said showers R disgusting
- haven't been allowed to smoke there for 3 yrs
- locked doors to get in & sign in sheet, but other than that I had lots of "freedom" once in the library
- general atmosphere of the grp was happy
- very appreciative to have snacks, gift bags, & pens!!
- conversation became very emotional @ times
- very talkative (I could barely ask any qs)
- they definitely lead the conversation & what they wanted to talk about

- I was nervous to do the FG, fearful they'd be receptive

Appendix 16- (In)Adequacy of 2005 Welfare Incomes

	Total Welfare Income	Poverty Line	Poverty Gap	Total Welfare Income as % of Poverty Line
New Brunswick				
Single Employable	\$3,427	\$17,895	-\$14,468	19%
Person with a Disability	\$7,995	\$17,895	-\$9,900	45%
Lone Parent, One Child	\$13,656	\$22,276	-\$8,620	61%
Couple, Two Children	\$17,567	\$33,251	-\$15,684	53%
Newfoundland and Labrador				
Single Employable	\$8,198	\$17,895	-\$9,697	46%
Person with a Disability	\$9,728	\$17,895	-\$8,167	54%
Lone Parent, One Child	\$16,181	\$22,276	-\$6,095	73%
Couple, Two Children	\$19,578	\$33,251	-\$13,673	59%
Nova Scotia				
Single Employable	\$5,422	\$17,895	-\$12,473	30%
Person with a Disability	\$8,897	\$17,895	-\$8,998	50%
Lone Parent, One Child	\$12,917	\$22,276	-\$9,359	58%
Couple, Two Children	\$19,032	\$33,251	-\$14,219	57%
Prince Edward Island				
Single Employable	\$6,214	\$17,784	-\$11,570	35%
Person with a Disability	\$8,084	\$17,784	-\$9,700	45%
Lone Parent, One Child	\$13,707	\$22,139	-\$8,432	62%
Couple, Two Children	\$21,213	\$33,046	-\$11,833	64%

Source: National Council on Welfare (2006)

Appendix 17- Community Residential Facilities in Atlantic Canada that Provide Support to

Women

Location	Facility	Organization	Gender Served	Total Number of Beds	Number of Beds for Women
New Brunswick					
Moncton	Greenfield House	Salvation Army	♀♂	21	4
Saint John	Hart House	John Howard Society	♀♂	17	--
Newfoundland and Labrador					
Labrador	Labrador Friendship Centre		♀♂	3	--
St. John's	Emmanuel House	Stella Burry Corporation	♀♂	16	--
Stephenville	Westbridge House	John Howard Society of Newfoundland & Labrador	♀♂	14	--
Nova Scotia					
Halifax	Adsum House	The Association for Women's Residential Facilities	♀♂	As Required	--
Halifax	Marguerite Centre		♀	12	12
Halifax	Neihley House ¹	St. Leonard's Society of Nova Scotia	♀	8	8
Halifax	Holly House	Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia	♀	8	8
Sydney	Howard House Association of Cape Breton		♀♂	15	3
Sydney	Elizabeth Fry Society Satellite Apartment	Elizabeth Fry Society of Cape Breton	♀	5	5
Truro	Lavers House	Dismas Society	♀♂	16	4
Prince Edward Island					
Charlottetown	Lacey House		♀	6	6
Charlottetown	Talbot House	Addictions Services-Queen's Region	♀♂	Detox 25 Rehab 32	Detox -- Rehab 16

(Source: Corrections Services Canada, 2006)

-- Data Not Specified

♀ Women

♂ Men

¹ Women-only Half-way House

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