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Canada

**Voices from Immigrant Youth:
Perceptions of their Involvement with the Canadian Justice System
A Qualitative Study**

By

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THESIS

**Submitted to the Department of Psychology
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts degree**

Wilfrid Laurier University

2002

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ABSTRACT

The development of the thesis project “Voices from Immigrant Youth: Perceptions of their Involvement with the Canadian Justice System. A Qualitative Study” satisfies two purposes. First, it fulfills an academic requirement that I have to meet in order to obtain the Master of Arts in Community Psychology, and, second, it explores an issue that was identified as a social concern by members of the Latin American community in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

The study explores the issues faced by Latin American immigrant youth in their process of adapting to Canadian society, and highlights their experiences and perceptions regarding their involvement with the Canadian justice system as well as their need for support and services. The study also offers recommendations geared to improve the well-being of immigrant youth.

Methodologically, a qualitative method of inquiry guided the study. It focused on obtaining in-depth and detailed information about this social phenomenon that concerned some members and parents of the Latin American community in Kitchener-Waterloo. The participatory-action research approach allowed community members to participate in the study through their involvement with the Community Support Group. This group supported the study by guiding and providing feedback to the research, reaching participants, and validating and checking my perceptions regarding the Latin American community. Data, rich in content, were collected from members of the Community Support Group and in-depth individual interviews with the nine Latin American youth,

two parents, and two service providers. Theories such as the phenomenological paradigm of inquiry, the ecological paradigm, and the promotion-prevention-protection continuum were used in the interpretation and analysis of the information.

The findings show that for the participants, immigration to Canada and the acculturation process was a highly demanding period in their lives. It brought pressures and challenges for them, in a time in which they were also facing the developmental task of adolescence. The findings show that participants and their families were experiencing risk factors associated with socio-economic and environmental circumstances such as poverty, lack of social support networks, lack of awareness of service providers of their needs as immigrants, and discrimination and prejudice. In my perception, the socio-economic conditions plus the family and personal issues with which participants were living generated by the stresses and challenges of the migration process more likely created the conditions for their involvement with the Canadian Justice System.

Participants voiced their perception of the Canadian Justice System and the impact that their involvement with the system had on their young lives. The perception of being harassed or discriminated against as well as the lack of information on how the legal system works and the need for information in their own language was also mentioned. A review of the needs for support brought forward the need for support at different levels, not only for immigrant families in general, but specifically for youth already in contact with the Canadian Justice System.

From my perspective, the study provides background on an issue that was a concern for some members of the Latin American community in Kitchener-Waterloo, but

that may also affect other immigrant youth in the same situation. It confirms what has been reported in other studies regarding the migration process. In my view, the study also offers evidence that socio-economic determinants have a strong effect on how a disadvantaged population, immigrants in this case, access services and make choices. It also shows that in the case of the immigrant youth of the study institutional responses to their needs were not present or were insufficient. Based on the participants' perceptions, a set of recommendations is also presented.

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**To the participants in the study, whose experiences are the foundation of this thesis,
To their parents, for supporting their participation in the study,
To the community support group, for their support and enthusiasm,
To the parents and service providers
whose opinions and perceptions allowed me to complete the picture of the phenomenon
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**To my advisor, Dr. Edward Bennett,
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Thank you!**

**To Dr. Harold Remus,
I am extremely grateful for your help.
Many thanks! Gracias!**

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the special people that make my life wonderful and meaningful:

My husband Eliseo,

**My children Patricia, Rolando, Alex, and Evelyn, and
their significant others.**

Your support, encouragement, and assistance along the way of this process kept me going!

To all of you with love

In memory of

My father Miguel, and

my brothers Osmin and Ernesto

**When you were alive, you were thirsty for justice and peace in our tiny country.
Now I treasure your memories by living my life according to our values and family
traditions.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
DEDICATION	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
I INTRODUCTION	1
A. Purpose and Research Questions	1
B. How do I Fit in This Context	2
C. How the Project Emerged	5
D. Phases of the Project	7
Phase I Community Organizing Around the Issue	7
Phase II Data-gathering, Analysis and Interpretation	8
Phase III Giving the Finding Back to the Community	9
II OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	11
A. On Immigrant Issues	11
Legal Basis for Immigration	11
Who Are the Immigrants?	12
Immigrants and Refugees: Human Diversity	14
The Adaptation Process of Immigrants	15
Challenges of the Migration Process	17
B. On Youth and Immigration	20
Immigrant Youth: Challenges	20
Immigrant Youth: Risk and Protective Factors	23
-Risk Factors for Adolescents in General	24
-Risk Factors for Immigrant Youth	27
-Protective Factors for Adolescents in General	29
-Protective Factors for Immigrant Youth	30

Youth in Conflict with the Law	32
C. On Crime Issues	35
Social Construction of Crime	35
Components of the Canadian Justice System	36
On Sentencing	37
Process of Justice Administration	37
On Incarceration	38
Need for a New Approach to Sentencing	39
Crime Prevention	40
III PROJECT FRAMEWORK	42
A. Theoretical Framework to Understand the Reality	42
On Knowledge and Paradigms of Inquiry	42
Phenomenological Paradigm of Inquiry	44
Symbolic Interactionism as a Perspective for the Study of Crime	47
-The Individual and Society in Symbolic Interactionism	48
-Society as “Negotiated Order”	49
-Symbolic Interactionism and Knowledge Development	49
-Symbolic Interactionism and the Study of Crime	52
Alternative Approaches in Community Psychology	53
The Ecological Approach to Health and Wellness	53
B. Research Approach	55
Qualitative Approach	55
Participatory Action Research	56
The Promotion-Prevention-Protection Continuum	57
C. Research Context	58
Immigrants in Waterloo Region	58
The Latin American Community in Waterloo Region	58
Immigrant Youth in the Study	59
D. Methodology	60

Reaching Participants	60
-Immigrant Youth	60
-Community Support Group	61
-Key Informants	61
Data Collection Procedures	62
-Immigrant Youth: Individual Interviews	62
-Data from Community Support Group	63
-Data from Informal Conversations with Key Informants	63
Analysis and Interpretation of Data	64
-Analysis of Data	64
-Interpretation of Data	64
-Trustworthiness of Data	65
Relationships with Participants in the Research Process	68
-Values	68
-Ethical Issues in the Research Process	68
IV FINDINGS	71
Section 1: Voices from Immigrant Youth	71
A. Voices from Immigrant Youth: Perceptions of the Migration Process	72
Participants' Background	72
Participants's Perceptions, Experiences and Feelings Regarding the Migration Process	73
Challenges of the Migration Process	75
-Individual Level	75
-Family Level	76
<i>Changes in Relationships Among Family Members</i>	76
<i>Shifts in Cultural Values Among Family Members</i>	77
-Community Level	78
<i>School Setting</i>	78
<i>Unsupported School Environment</i>	79

<i>Peer Relationships</i>	80
-Latin American Community	82
<i>Fragmentation and Group Differences</i>	82
Lack of Organization	83
<i>Lack of Voice and Representation</i>	83
-Society Level	83
B. Voices from Immigrant Youth: Involvement with the Canadian Justice System	84
Offenses Committed by Participants	84
Causes of Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System	85
Consequences of Breaking the Law	85
Reactions to Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System	86
-Own Reaction	86
-Parents' Reaction	87
-Friends' Reaction	88
-Community Members' Reaction	88
Participants' Perception of the Canadian Justice System	89
-Police	89
-Court Proceedings	89
-Sentencing	91
-Alternatives Measures	92
Participants' Feelings	93
C. Voices from Immigrant Youth: Perceptions of Need for Support and Prevention	
Activities	93
Immigrant Youth's Perceptions on Needs for Supports	94
-Individual Level	94
<i>Need for Information</i>	94
-Family Level	95
<i>Family Support and Better Communication</i>	95
<i>Parents' Involvement with School and Community</i>	96

<i>Support and Services for Families</i>	96
-Community Level	96
<i>Increase Awareness in the School System of the Needs of Immigrant Youth</i>	97
<i>Need to Preserve the Latin American Culture</i>	97
<i>Need for Community Organization and Participation</i>	98
-Societal Level	98
<i>Need for Information</i>	98
<i>Services</i>	99
<i>Root Causes</i>	100
Immigrant Youth's Suggestions for Prevention Activities	100
-Pro-active Universal Approaches to Prevention	100
<i>Policies and Programs for All</i>	100
-Pro-active High-Risk Approaches	101
-Reactive Approaches	102
Section 2: Voices from Community Stakeholders	103
A. Community Concerns	103
B. Perceptions, Feelings and Opinions	104
Parents' Feelings	104
Perceptions of Causes of Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System ...	106
-Family Violence	106
-Family Breakdown	106
-Single-Parent Families	107
-Socio-economic Concerns	107
-Lack of Community Support	108
-Societal Causes	109
Perceptions of the Canadian Society	110
-Systemic Discrimination and Prejudice	110
-Understanding of the System	110
-Lack of Integration of Community Services	111

V DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	113
A. Immigrant Youth and Developmental Stages of Adolescence	114
B. Immigrant Youth and their Adaptation Process	115
On the Migration Process	115
Social Relationships and the Migration Process	117
-Family Relationships	117
-Peer Relationships	118
-Community Processes and Relationships	121
-Societal Relationships and Its Processes	122
Immigrants' Risk and Protective Factors	123
C. Social Construction of Crime and Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System	124
V SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	128
A. Contributions to Literature	128
B. Value of Participatory Action Research for this Project	129
C. Research Limitations	131
D. Future Research	132
E. Personal Reflections	133
Appendix 1 Information Letter to Participants. English and Spanish Versions	135
Appendix 2 Open Ended Individual Interview Questionnaire	139
Appendix 3 Informed Consent Statement. English and Spanish Versions	142
Appendix 4 Immigrant Youth's Experiences, Perceptions and Feelings Regarding the Migration Process	150
Appendix 5 Causes of Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System as Perceived by Participants	153
Appendix 6 Causes of Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System as Perceived by Parents	154
Appendix 7 Causes of Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System as Perceived by Service Providers	155

Appendix 8	Consequences of Involvement with the Canadian Justice System	156
Appendix 9	Participants' Reactions to their Involvement with the Canadian Justice System	157
Appendix 10	Families' Reaction to Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System as Perceived by Participants	158
Appendix 11	Friends' Reactions to Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System as Perceived by Participants	159
Appendix 12	Community Members' Reactions to Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System as Perceived by Participants	160
Appendix 13	Immigrant Youth's Perceptions of the Canadian Justice System	161
Appendix 14	Immigrant Youth's Perceptions of the Need for Support and Services	164
REFERENCES	167

I

INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis project, “Voices from Immigrant Youth: Perceptions of their Involvement with the Canadian Justice System. A Qualitative Study,” was to obtain an understanding of the experiences and perceptions of Latin-American immigrant youth in relation to the migration process and their involvement with the Canadian Justice System (CJS).

First, I wanted to know whether participants' experiences of the migration process differed or corroborated what has been reported in the literature on this issue.

Specifically, I wanted to explore whether participants felt there is a relationship between the demands and challenges of the migration process and their involvement with the Canadian Justice System.

Second, I was interested in exploring their perspective on the causes of their involvement, since much of the literature on youth crime emphasizes family violence, family breakdowns, and personal risk factors as causes of youth involvement with the Canadian Justice System. Other reports identify social determinants as the root causes of youth involvement with the Canadian Justice System.

Third, I wished to understand the perspectives of youth involved with the CJS to determine the need for support of immigrant youth and their families. Participants were asked to identify those needs and to include suggestions for services at all levels. The research questions that guided the project were the following:

- How do Latin-American immigrant youth perceive their migration process?
- How do Latin-American immigrant youth perceive and manage their involvement with the Canadian Justice System?
- How do Latin-American immigrant youth perceive the Canadian Justice System?
- What can be “learned” from the experience of Latin-American immigrant youth with the Canadian Justice System?

B. How Do I Fit in This Context?

I come from El Salvador, one of the smallest countries in Latin America, but a country with a long history of oppression. In El Salvador, the legal system, its institutions, and its representatives, are there to look after the interests of a small minority that rule the country, not to represent the needs of the majority. Salvadorean citizens have been struggling for human rights and social justice for many decades (North, 1985). A sad page in our history is the massacre of more than 20,000 people committed by the Martinez government in 1932 (Alegria, 1995). This lesson from history taught Salvadoreans that one way to challenge the system in El Salvador is to organize themselves in popular organizations to claim the human rights and social justice denied for many years (Henriquez, 1988). The answer of the government to a popular movement for social justice was a massive and selective political repression that started in the 1970s (Martin-Baro, 1989). It developed into an open armed conflict between the repressive government forces and people organized in the FMLN (Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional) that lasted for more than 20 years.

The signing of the peace agreement between both groups in 1991 brought some

political stability to the country but did not solve the social injustices in which Salvadoreans live. The political unrest caused the death or disappearance of more than 75,000 people, led more than one million Salvadoreans to abandon the country as refugees, and left the country with thousands of people with physical and mental disabilities, a broken economy, and a climate of social despair that still prevails after many years since the armed conflict ended.

During the armed conflict period, I worked as a health professional with a government agency. Like many others at that time, I witnessed the social inequalities that were present in the everyday life of people from poor communities. Grass roots organizations and communities were in the process of organizing and challenging the system for what they considered their basic human rights. The belief that health as well as education, housing, food, and social justice are human rights as established by the United Nations motivated me to get involved with non-governmental organizations that were implementing community development projects in low socio-economic communities. The provision of health services and health promotion activities at the community level, in the midst of an open armed conflict and social instability, was conceived in many cases as a legitimate act against oppression, but it was seen as subversive activities by the government at that time. As a result, my family and I were forced to leave the country and come to Canada.

Like many immigrants in a new country, my first years in Canada were occupied in becoming acquainted with my new country. I was exposed to the barriers and challenges of the migration experience, and like many others like me, I went through

periods of despair and hopelessness created by the total break between the environments that I knew in El Salvador, and those in which I was living here in Canada. Later on, I learned that, at that time, all my assumptions that came from my cultural background, personal experiences, education, and world views were being reshaped while I was struggling to break the language and cultural barriers and fit into this society.

Slowly, as my communication skills improved and I learned more about the community in which I was living, I became involved, as a volunteer, with community agencies and grass roots groups engaged in a variety of activities supporting disadvantaged communities or social justice issues. Then, I was fortunate to find a paid job in an area for which I was professionally trained, and whose target populations were disadvantaged communities in Waterloo Region. My involvement with these groups, through my work and volunteer activities, gave me insights and a new perspective on the difficulties faced not just by immigrants but also by other groups in the Region.

As I continued my volunteer work with immigrants in the community, I realized that as immigrants we face commonalities and differences and that we need to work collaboratively with others in looking for solutions for our needs and challenges. After a very long process of personal self-assessment, I decided that I wanted to continue working with this population, but that I needed to acquire new knowledge and develop new skills to help me understand, in some more systematic ways, the context of their lives. After making some inquiries and checking many programs, I applied for admission to the Master of Arts Program in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University. I felt that the Community Psychology Program would respond to my academic needs and

interests and was in line with my core set of values of individual self-determination, community participation in decision-making processes that affect their well-being, and social justice. In dealing with others I believe in fairness, impartiality and honesty. I also believe that individuals need to be respected and appreciated for their abilities to define themselves.

C. How The Project Emerged

The Master of Arts Program in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University requires students to develop and complete a thesis project in partial fulfilment of the academic requirements. When it was time for me to decide on the focus of my thesis, I felt that it was an opportunity for me to explore an issue that could be a social concern for immigrants. As I started thinking of potential themes, comments and pieces of conversations that I have had with some members of the Latin American community came to my mind. Usually, in these conversations, the topic was the involvement of Latin American youth with the Canadian Justice System. As a newcomer parent, immigrant, and member of the Latin American community, I became interested in this issue and decided to explore it as part of my academic requirements. However, following the principles of participatory action research, I decided that before I made a decision to commit myself to this issue, I needed to find out if the issue was a concern for members of the Latin American community and not just for me and those with whom I was in contact. I needed to determine with the Latin American community whether the issue was worthy of devoting time and effort to it.

In order to explore it, I contacted some key informants: leaders, parents, and staff

of Latin-American background working with community agencies serving immigrants. I sought out information on what they knew about the issue. This informal exploration showed that youth involvement with the justice system was a concern for some members of the Latin American community. Most of the opinions were related to how difficult and challenging it is for newcomer parents to raise children in the Canadian environment, as well as how frustrated, helpless and worried parents felt when their children get into trouble with the law. However, I noticed that the issue was always discussed from the parents' perspective, and rarely from the perspective of the young people involved. Little was said about the conditions that generate the issue, and almost nobody mentioned how the children perceived this experience or how they think the experience will affect or impact their lives in the near future as a member of society. Rarely did anybody talk about the young people's perceptions and opinions regarding their transgression of the law.

For the above reasons, I decided to explore the issue, and to focus on the youths' perspectives and experiences with the Canadian Justice System and its social implications. I thought that this approach would provide a new perspective on an important community problem. I decided to use a participatory research approach because I wanted to offer youth, in this situation, an opportunity to be heard and to voice their concerns and opinions. That is how "Voices from Immigrant Youth: Perceptions of their Involvement with the Canadian Justice System. A Qualitative Study" emerged.

The development of this Master's thesis project satisfies two purposes. First, it fulfills an academic requirement for the Master of Arts in Community Psychology.

Second, it explores an issue that was identified as a social concern by members of the Kitchener-Waterloo Latin American community.

D. Phases of the Project

Phase I Community Organizing Around the Issue

The principles of participatory action research speak to the need of community involvement as a way to give voice to those members of the community affected by an issue. With this purpose, I sought to organize a Community Support Group (CSG) as a setting in which members of the community could participate in the project. I invited people from my social network (community members, parents, and staff working in community agencies serving immigrants) to be part of the CSG. I sent them a letter explaining the thesis project, followed by a phone call. Nine people out of twenty three accepted the invitation. Then I sent them a copy of the thesis proposal as well as an invitation to a first meeting.

The first meeting had two purposes. One was to obtain feedback on the thesis project, and the other was to discuss the role of the committee. The group agreed that the committee would: support the development of the study, encourage immigrant youth to become involved in the project, help raise awareness of the issue among the Latin American community at large, and find ways to implement the recommendations from the study into future interventions. By this agreement, the committee's role supports the principles of participatory research of bringing forward the voice of the community, voice concerns, support the development of the study, and look for practical ways of implementing recommendations if any. The group also agreed that their participation was

entirely voluntary and that the group's main goal was to look for ways to improve the well-being of immigrant youth.

The CSG participated in reviewing the entire proposal which was accepted during the first meeting. The group participated in the different phases of the project. In the first phase they were instrumental in discussing issues that supported the study such as how to reach participants, confidentiality, and privacy issues. The ethical guidelines approved by Wilfrid Laurier University were helpful in showing them how I was going to manage those concerns. We made a schedule for meetings with the group, but I let them know that the schedule was just for organizational purposes and that I welcomed any communication or suggestions at any time. The CSG also suggested the need to interview some parents of participants and service providers, in order to have a more complete picture of the phenomenon. Following this recommendation I interviewed two parents and two service providers.

Phase II Data-gathering, Analysis and Interpretation

In this phase, the CSG was very helpful in promoting the study within their social networks. It is important to mention that making contact with potential participants was one of the challenges of this study. The support of the CSG allowed me to identify participants and to obtain an agreement from some of them to participate in the study. The process for data gathering and analysis and interpretation of data is described in more depth in the methodology section of this study.

I conducted in-depth individual interviews with nine Latin-American youth who have been involved with the Canadian Justice System, and with two parents and service

providers. Then I proceeded to analyze and interpret the data. When I completed the results, I sent participants a summary of the findings with the purpose of validating the information generated from the interviews. When I did not receive any feedback from them, I proceeded with phase III.

Phase III Giving the Findings Back to the Community

In this phase, I met again with the CSG. The objectives of the meeting were the following: present the initial findings of the study, check and validate my perceptions regarding the Latin American community, and explore the best way to use those results in benefit of the youth involved with the CJS. I presented the findings of the study to them, and as a group we engaged in a discussion of how to disseminate this information to the community.

Members of the committee advised that the findings of the study should be presented to the Latin-American community of Kitchener-Waterloo at large in a community forum. The forum would provide an opportunity to discuss the findings and explore further follow-up work based on the recommendations. After discussing the issue, the CSG decided that the forum and the follow-up work with the community should be delayed until the thesis had been approved and defended at the University. The rationale for this decision was based on the acknowledgment that any further action to implement the recommendations of the study would require the involvement and commitment of the community at large and not only from the CSG. The other reasons were the lengthy process and time required to get commitment from participants, the CSG, and community members, and of building towards the community forum and

follow-up work. At this time of the process my time availability, as well as that of the CSG for dissemination of findings, was limited. We agreed to pursue these activities, and any others that result from this study, until after I had defended the thesis. Members of the CSG are willing to reconvene once my commitment with the University is over.

II

OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A. On Immigration Issues

Legal Basis for Immigration

Immigration plays an important role in the social development of Canada, and has been considered a desirable means for achieving social, economic, and humanitarian objectives (Beaujot & Matthews, 2000; Bernstein, 1997; Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2001). It accounts for a significant part of Canada's population, for its rate of growth and demographic structure (Beaujot & Matthews, 2000). Immigration waves started around 1861 with the arrival of northern European immigrants (Beiser, Wood, Barwick, Berry, de Costa, Milne, Fantino, Ganesan, Lee, Tousignant, Naidoo, Prince, & Vela, 1988) and has continued over the years, steadily increasing in numbers and diversity (Beaujot & Mathews, 2000; Beiser et al., 1988; CIC, 2001).

Canada's Immigration Act and Regulations provide guidelines for Canada's immigration policy and procedures. These are based on the fundamental principles of "non-discrimination, family reunification, humanitarian concern for refugees, and the promotion of Canada's social, economic, demographic and cultural goals" (CIC, 2000b, p. 1). The Act links the immigration movement to Canada's population and labour market needs, allows family reunification, and introduces security measures to protect Canada from international terrorism and organized crime.

The Act outlines an estimate of the total number of immigrants, Convention refugees and others who will be admitted to Canada on humanitarian grounds and

delineates the shared responsibilities on immigration of the federal and provincial governments (CIC, 2000b, pp. 3-9; CIC, 1999). Bernstein (1997) describes that public perceptions of immigration and public concerns related to Canada's economic circumstances play a role in setting the immigration program as was the case in 1995. That year, the plan incorporated changes related to a "slowdown in immigration intake; a shift from family to economic immigration; new selection criteria that put more emphasis on education, on language ability and on adaptability to changing labour markets; a greater emphasis on integration, and new financial agreements placing more of the onus for financing integration on the sponsoring family and on the immigrants themselves" (Bernstein, 1997, p. 3).

Who Are the Immigrants?

Canada's Immigration Law identifies three classes of immigrants under which people can be admitted into the country: family class, Convention refugees, and independent immigrants. Independent immigrants include all immigrants who apply on their own initiative. Under family class, Canadian citizens and permanent residents aged 19 and over and living in Canada have the right to sponsor certain close relatives who wish to immigrate to Canada. A Convention refugee is one that meets the definition of the United Nations Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of which Canada is signatory (CIC, 2000b, pp. 3-9).

These terms reflect legal differences between immigrants and refugees, but it has been reported that the main difference between immigrants and refugees is the power to choose and the pre-migration experiences (Beiser, Dion, Gotowiew, Hyman, & Vu, 1995;

Hicks, Lalonde, & Pepler, 1993). These authors describe that usually immigrants choose to migrate by their own free will, whereas refugees are forced to leave their countries of origin for different reasons (Beiser et al., 1988). Some refugees may have experienced the deaths of friends and family members, loss of their home and possessions, internment in refugee camps, and perhaps torture in their country of origin (Beiser et al., 1995).

Beiser et al. (1988) reported that the lack of decision making power to control the reasons for settling in another country may have implications for the adaptation process of immigrants and refugees in the new country.

The refugee claimants may have suffered the same problems as Convention Refugees in their country of origin, but once they have decided to come to Canada and appear in front of the immigration officer, they may decide to request refugee status under the Geneva Convention. Then they have to follow a legal process to be granted the status of refugee. In most instances, the process is lengthy and stressful (Beiser et al., 1995). Refugee claimants need to present evidence that establishes their claim in a court hearing. During the hearing, the evidence is reviewed and it is decided whether or not the claimant qualifies as a Convention refugee. If they do not qualify, refugee claimants are sent back to their home country. While refugee claimants wait for the hearing to happen, they are unable to bring family members left behind, are not eligible for some services, and are found living in conditions of poverty (Beiser et al., 1988; Lee, 2000). It has also been reported (CIC, 2001, p. 24; National Council of Welfare, 1999) that refugee claimants find themselves living in a very stressful situation, generated by the uncertainty of being accepted or rejected as Convention refugee.

Immigrants and Refugees: Human Diversity

The report "Canada's Recent Immigrants. A Comparative Portrait Based on the 1996 Census" (CIC, 2001) shows that Canada is among one of the major immigrant-receiving countries in the world, along with Australia, the United States and New Zealand. The report mentions that, out of Canada's total population in 1996 (28.5 million), 17% (5 million) were immigrants, of which 43% (2.1 million) landed between 1981 and 1996 and are known as recent immigrants. Those who landed between 1991 to 1996 are called most recent immigrants.

The origins of immigrants to Canada have drastically changed, over the past few decades, due to two fundamental changes in Canada's immigration policy (CIC, 1999, 2000a, 2001). The first change was the abolition in 1967 of the preferential access for persons from European countries, and the second was the increase in the average number of immigrants that are accepted every year. These changes, along with the situation in the country of origin of immigrants, have had an effect on the type and number of immigrants coming to the country.

The same reports (CIC, 2000a, p. 8; 2001) mention that recent immigrants come now from all over the world. One in two recent immigrants were born in a country in Asia, with East Asia--Hong Kong, China, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan--accounting for one quarter (26%) of immigrants who landed in the first half of the 1990s. They settled mostly in the provinces of British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec.

The CIC report (2001) also mentions that 39% of recent immigrants entered the country through the family class, 40% through the economic or independent class, and

14% came as refugees. It also mentions that 48% of recent immigrants are 25 to 44 years of age, 14 % are children under 15, and there are relatively fewer persons of 45 and over among recent immigrants (p. 22). In relation to education and language skill, the report mentions that for 52% of recent immigrants and 67% of most recent immigrants, the language most often spoken at home is neither English nor French but a foreign language (pp. 25-32). The level of education of recently immigrated men is higher than that of the Canadian-born, and for women it is similar to that of the Canadian-born. The report also mentions that recent immigrants contribute to the number of physical scientists and engineers and that adult recent immigrants pursue studies at a higher rate than Canadian-born.

The Adaptation Process of Immigrants

Independent of the category under which immigrants in general enter the country, they start a process of acclimatization to the host country. This process has been called “second culture acquisition” (La Framboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993, cited in Amio, 1999) or “acculturation process” (Berry, 1996, cited in Aycan & Berry, 1996; Sands & Berry, 1993). According to Sands and Berry, acculturation is the internal process of negotiation among at least two culturally distinct groups that continue over time, the end result of which is the cultural transformation of one or both groups. In this process, immigrants accommodate whatever life experiences they bring from their homeland and the new ones developed in their interaction with the new country.

In the process of “acculturation,” Berry and Kim (1988) identify five phases: pre-contact, contact of the two groups impelled by different purposes, intergroup and

psychological conflict (although not necessarily occurring), crisis point (which is also a possibility), and some kind of adaptation. The process of acculturation brings unique and gradual challenges in the way of life of those migrating, especially challenges related to discrepancies between adolescents and their parents over issues of family obligations (Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000). These challenges, according to Cole (1998), arise from pre- and post-migration experiences and from migration itself, and may affect migrants' well being (Prilleltensky, 1993). The pre-migration experiences of refugees could have been associated with "persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular group or political opinion" (CIC, 2000b, p. 23).

Previous experiences in their homeland can make refugees vulnerable in many ways when they arrive in the host country (Beiser et al., 1995; Berry, 1988, 1983). Phinney et al. (2000) suggest that the generality of processes of changes that occur with acculturation may be attributed to a number of factors such as place of birth, age at migration, and length of time in the new culture.

Acculturation for immigrants and refugee children has been described as a stressful, lengthy process marked by several challenges, which set them apart from native-born children (Beiser et al., 1995; Beiser et al., 1988; Hicks et al, 1993; Prilleltensky, 1993). Beiser et al. (1995) uses the terms "crisis of loss" and "crisis of load" to name the newcomers' losses and life changes experienced by immigrant children and their families. It has been mentioned that the greater the disparity between their past and present circumstances, the more difficult it is for newcomers to adjust in the host country (Beiser et al., 1995; Beiser et.al, 1988; Prilleltensky, 1993).

The stress and anxiety or “acculturative stress” (Berry, 1992) associated with the adaptation process can make this period one of the most stressful phases in one’s life (Berry, 1992). Some studies report that migrant children may be more vulnerable than adults to the stress of the migration process because children are in the process of acquiring a cultural identity, may be lacking the linguistic abilities to verbalize their experiences and definitely lack the decision making power that adults hold (Beiser et al., 1995; Berry, 1992; Freire, 1993, cited in Amio, 1999; Hicks et al., 1993; Kilbride, Anisef, Baichman-Anisef, & Khattar., 2000). However, more and more there is a recognition that there may be protective factors that enable immigrant and refugee children to buffer the adverse effects of adaptation (Prilleltensky, 1993). It also seems that the older children are when they arrive, the more they are confronted with and urged to assess their differences in personal values and attitudes in areas such as health care, education, family life, parenting, place of family in one’s life, religion, and how society should be organized, among others (Hicks et al., 1993). This situation can make it harder for older children to adapt.

Challenges of the Migration Process

Some of the challenges that immigrants in general face are related to language barriers, difficulties in finding jobs, and attaining economic prosperity. Aycan and Berry (1996) report on the process of acculturation with specific emphasis on the impact of economic integration on psychological well-being and adaptation. They mention that the inability to fully integrate into the labour force in the first six months in Canada was attributed mainly to the lack of competence in both official languages, difficulty in getting

credentials and accreditations recognized in Canada, and the lack of Canadian work experiences.

Dunn and Dyck (2000) used data from the National Population Health Survey (NPHS) to study the social determinants of health in Canada's immigrant population. They found no obvious, consistent pattern of association between socio-economic characteristics, immigration characteristics and health status in the NPHS data. The authors argue that the findings do not suggest that socio-economic factors are not important in shaping immigrant health status. The authors explain that major limitations of this kind of research are the inherent limitations of cross-sectional survey data as well as trying to define in a simple explanation the complexity of immigrants' experiences. In relation to psychological well-being, Aycan and Berry (1996) found that the adversity experienced by immigrants as status loss, unemployment and underemployment have a negative impact on both psychological well-being and adaptation to Canada. One of the reasons provided is because "work, other than providing income, provides purpose to life, defines status and identity, and enables individuals to establish relationships with others in society" (p. 248).

In the same venue of employment and income, a report by Lock, Milan and Schetagne (2001) shows that visible minorities and aboriginal men and women in Canada are kept out of good jobs and promotions in the labour market. The authors use the most recent statistics available, primarily data from the 1996 Census, and data from focus group discussions held with visible minorities and aboriginal men and women in five cities across Canada. They found that higher education yields fewer payoffs for

minorities, and that racism is more covert today in Canadian society. They also found that good jobs are elusive for minorities and that immigrants have difficulties with credentials recognition. Their findings confirm what Mata (1999) explores in his paper related to the problems of the non-accreditation of foreign-trained professional in Canada. Mata touches on the major societal impacts of the problem, plus the stages and barriers in the immigrant accreditation process.

Galabuzi (2001) calls attention to the growing racialisation of the gap between the rich and poor. She challenges some common myths used to deflect public concern and to mask the growing social crisis. Galabuzi also points to the role of historical patterns of systemic racial discrimination as key to understanding the persistent over-representation of racialised groups in low-paying occupations and low-income sectors, their higher unemployment and their poverty and social marginalisation. Galabuzi also mentions that historical patterns of differential treatment and occupational segregation in the labour market, and discriminatory governmental and institutional policies and practices, have led to the reproduction of racial inequality in other areas of Canadian life. She also points out that this growing phenomenon is proceeding with minimal public and policy attention, despite the dire implications for Canadian society.

The limitations findings jobs as well as other systemic barriers limit the participation in the labour market of recent immigrants and refugee claimants who are more likely to be living in poverty than is the general population (Burman, 1996; Dunn, in press; Lee, 2000; National Council of Welfare, 1999; The Urban Poverty Consortium of Waterloo Region, 2000). Immigrant women are less likely than immigrant men to

speak either of Canada's official languages (Waterloo Region Community Health Department, 1999, p. 14) which becomes a significant obstacle for them in accessing employment and community resources.

B. On Youth and Immigration

Immigrant Youth: Challenges

A report prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development [CCSD] (1999) estimates that 230 000 immigrant children and youth arrived in Canada between 1996 and 1998. Nearly half of them came from Asia and the Pacific region. Many had little knowledge of English or French when they arrived, and recent young immigrants between the ages of 20 and 24 were more likely to speak English than were younger immigrants. The report also mentions that like their adult counterparts, immigrant children and youth generally were found living in large urban centres, especially Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal (CCSD, 1999).

The meaning of adolescence varies cross-culturally, and the transition to this developmental stage is a challenge for immigrant youth as well as for any other youth. Developmental tasks in areas related to "sexuality, family, cognitive, peers, social integration, education, employment, ethics, identities, and legal" (Cameron, O'Reilly, Laurendeau, & Chamberland, 1999, p. 298) have been identified in this stage. Cameron et al. argue that while youth are experimenting with their new-found power and increasing independence, they have continuing needs for supportive family relationships at a time when these connections often experience their greatest strains. It makes the transition of adolescence a potential for struggle even for youth growing up in a nurturing

non-immigrant family.

Additional challenges that immigrant youth might face as a result of the immigration process can be examined in the following way. Migration, as a process that continues through time, involves shifts in relationships and social locations (Phinney et al., 2000; Prillelstenky, 1993; Waters, 1999). These shifts can be observed in the area of intergenerational relationships, cultural norms and values, and affirmation of his/her role as an individual. Waters (1999) proposes that because immigrant parents did not grow up here, they continue to apply in Canada the familiar norms and values of the culture of their country of origin. Children, however, are exposed to the host-country values by peer group interactions, schools, and the process of mass media communication.

All of these factors provide the youth with similar messages about the nature of the individual and his or her role in society. The norms are different for parents and children creating a discontinuity between the immigrant values advanced by parents at home and the values proposed by the social world in which the youth live (Waters, 1999). As a result, immigrant youth who no longer feel at home with their families and their own culture may want to relinquish their own culture and attempt to become a part of the society they see around them (Waters, 1999). Waters also mentions that the shift in immigrants' relationships occurs in a social-structural context, which varies with the immigrant group, and is influenced by "education, income, availability of capital resources, racial attitudes, and social class as well as age and gender of the immigrant arriving to the host country" (Waters, 1999, p. 48).

Some studies (Beiser et al., 1988; CCSD, 2000; Centre for Research and

Education in Human Services [CREHS], 2000; Kilbride et al., 2000) report that the same as Canadian-born youth, immigrant youth struggle with their transition into adolescence, with building a sense of coherence out of the family in which they are raised and the larger society in which they participate. This struggle is heightened by language and cultural barriers, a prolonged separation from their parents, disruption in their education, and manifestations of racism or discrimination by the host country.

Kilbride et al. (2000), as well as other studies (Waters, 1999), report that immigrant youth may also be part of an unnatural role-reversal as a result of their ability to learn the new language more easily than their parents (Kilbride et al., 2000). The social and economic circumstances in which the immigrant families live can make children witness or, to a certain extent, live the problems experienced by their parents: homesickness, language problems, economic uncertainties, and painful absorption of the new culture (Kilbride et al., 2000).

Some other studies of immigrant youth (Cole, 1998; CREHS, 2000; CCSD, 1999; Kilbride et al, 2000) show that learning the new language and overcoming social isolation, particularly at school, were some of the challenges. In this regard, it has been reported that limited proficiency in the language of instruction is likely to have an impact on the academic performances of newly arrived immigrant students. It is also noted that it takes approximately one and a half to two years for immigrant children to achieve conversational fluency in the language of their receiving environment, but it requires a minimum of five to seven years to become proficient in abstract thought in the language to be learned and to function academically like native speakers (Beiser et al, 1988).

Immigrant youth find it difficult to feel totally accepted as Canadians because of their accents and their physical features, are less likely to have someone in whom they can confide, experience racism and bigotry, and think that racial discrimination is generally disguised (Kilbride et al., 2000). The same authors recommend that there is a need to identify bias and discriminatory barriers in existing curriculum structures, policies, programs, and learning materials consistent with anti racism objectives, as well as the need to have in place a curriculum that reflects, in an equitable way, a culturally and racially diverse society. It also means identification of staff development needs to ensure that they have the skills to identify and deal with the needs of newcomer children as well as issues of racism and discrimination.

Immigrant Youth: Risk and Protective Factors

Population health frameworks show that health outcomes depend on the following key determinants: social and economic environment, physical environment, personal health practices, individual capacity and coping skills and services needed for health. The ecological perspective of wellness achieved through the satisfaction of psychological, material and economic needs (Prilleltensky, Peirson & Nelson, 1999) requires an “integrated set of operations at key ecological levels: individual, family, community context and macrolevel societal structures and policies (Cowen, 1996, cited in Prilleltensky et al., 1999, p. 7). However, according to Prilleltensky et al. (1999), wellness can be considered the result of the relation between risk, protective and promoting factors. Carr and Vandiver (2001) define risk factors as those conditions that are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes, such as engaging in

problem behaviour, dropping out of school, and having trouble with the law” (p. 409).

Protective factors, on the other hand, are the “circumstances, events, or characteristics of a person or their environment that respectively increase the likelihood of positive outcomes” (Prilleltensky et al., 1999, p. 18). According to Prilleltensky et al., both are “moderated and mediated by personal and contextual variables and processes”(p. 18).

Risk Factors for Adolescents in General

Using the above concepts, the presence of one or more of the following risk factors in the lives of youth in general and immigrant youth in particular might suggest the possibilities of physical, emotional or psychological harm for that person.

- **Personality factors.** High levels of emotional distress such as aggression, hostility, and managing anger (Peirson, Laurendeau, & Chamberland., 1999, p. 91).
- **Poor mental health and biological predisposition** (Peirson et al., 1999, p. 92).
- **Poor social skills and the lack of socially-acceptable values and bonds** are a common correlate of anti-social and self-destructive difficulties for adolescents (Carr & Vandiver, 2001).
- **Early and persistent acting-out behaviors** by the child.
- **Difficulties with peers.** Early rejection by peers and the absence of positive involvements with pro-social adults outside of the home (Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Kiesner, Cadinu, Poulin, & Bucci, 2002)
- **Involvement with a delinquent peer network** (Carr & Vandiver, 2001).
- **Early sexual activity, substance abuse and/or academic failure** as well as low commitment to school have been singled out as important early warning signs

(Carr & Vandiver, 2001).

- **Parents' addictions to alcohol and drugs are often cited as contributing factors for youth involvement in delinquency (Cameron et al., 1999; Carr & Vandiver, 2001).**
- **Harsh, rigid or inconsistent parenting, and low attachment between parents and teens increase the risk of maltreatment and adolescent behaviour problems (Brody, Ge, Conger, Gibbons, Murry, Gerrard, & Simmons, 2001).**
- **Inadequate parental supervision and monitoring also places teens at risk (Brody et al., 2001; Walker- Barnes & Mason, 2001). Deviant family norms increase the likelihood of antisocial adolescent behaviors.**
- **Poor or undeveloped parenting skills (Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Peirson et al., 1999).**
- **Ongoing conflict between parents and teenagers, as well as inter-parental conflict and/or violence are very common predictors of difficulties for adolescents (Nelson, Laurendeau, Chamberland, & Peirson, 1999; Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001).**
- **Adolescent abuse where step-parents and parents' lovers are involved (Carr & Vandiver, 2001).**
- **Family size and structure. Household crowding and overextended economic and human resources may contribute to the elevated levels of neglect in some families (Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Peterson & Brow, 1994, cited in Peirson et al., 1999, p. 81).**
- **Lack of family time. Longer work hours and more jobs means parents are**

exhausted, overwhelmed and have less time and energy to dedicate to their children (Steinhauer, 1998, cited in Peirson et al., 1999, p. 83).

- **Impoverished single-parent families lacking resources and support to assist with parenting responsibilities can exacerbate the stress of raising a child alone (Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001).**
- **Family income is the most powerful factor that contributes to shape the settings in which adolescents live. It is related to access to services and opportunities (Bradley, Corwyn, Pipes, & Garcia, 2001; Jackson, 2001).**
- **Extreme conditions of family and neighborhood poverty (Brody et al., 2001; Peirson et al., 1999, p. 62).**
- **Traditional gender roles. Gender stereotypes limit the role of fathers in child rearing and doing household chores. They put the burden of child care on mothers and limit fathers' involvement in the lives of their children (Vondra, 1990, cited in Peirson et al., 1999, p. 70).**
- **The limited social ties to extended family, neighbors, and the collapse of informal community resources may compromise effective parenting and healthy family functioning (Bradley et al., 2001; Brody et al., 2001; Coulton et al., 1995, cited in Peirson et al., 1999, p. 72).**
- **Acute stressors such as economic insecurity; inadequate housing; lack of work, limited and unstable employment; loss of employment or the transition back into the workforce; transitions into and out of school; changes in residence; serious health problems; death of family members or close friends; separation and**

divorce; spousal conflict and violence; and neighborhood violence (Bouchard et al., 1996, cited in Peirson et al., 1999, p. 84).

- **Societal norms that promote violence, racism, discrimination and prejudice (Jackson, 2001; Peirson et al., 1999, p. 69)**

Some studies of immigrant youth (Beiser et al., 1995; Hicks et al., 1993) suggest that the alienation and frustration experienced by immigrants and refugees may result in poor mental and physical health and more mental disorders in these populations than in the host country population. However, other studies (Beiser et al., 1988) suggest that even though migration is a condition of risk for developing a mental disorder, it does not necessarily threaten mental health status. These studies suggest that more powerful predictors of mental health outcomes than migration per se are the differences in personal characteristics and the social situations in which migrants find themselves once living in the host country. Some of the conditions identified as risk factors associated with the migration process are the following:

Risk Factors for Immigrant Youth

- **The separation from family and community members due to the immigration process can create anxiety, depression, and an emotional, financial and political emptiness for immigrants in the host country (Beiser et al., 1988; Car & Vandiver, 2001; Kilbride et al., 2000; Prilleltensky, 1993).**
- **The inability to speak the language of the host country is a severe handicap for immigrants; language barriers prevent many immigrant families from learning about available resources and from understanding the cultural norms of the host**

country. Without language proficiency a person is unable to truly experience the new culture, turning into a marginal person in a society rather than a full participant (Beiser et al., 1988; Kilbride et al., 2000).

- The inability to communicate may have repercussions for immigrants that range from difficulties finding jobs to being deprived of sources of social support and community services. It brings isolation and loneliness which may lead to social alienation and emotional disorders (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Beiser et al., 1988).
- Immigrants may be pressured by host friends into adopting the sponsors' values and religion, or host friends may be overly intrusive in the family life (Beiser et al., 1988).
- Dislocation and interrupted schooling make it difficult for immigrant children and youth to integrate (Beiser et al., 1995).
- Canada's immigration policy admits well-trained, well-educated people who can contribute to the economy; however, once immigrants are here, the system fails to provide opportunities for immigrants to use the skills and education they bring to the country (Aycan & Berry, 1996).
- Both unemployment and underemployment are risk factors for mental health. Failure to find suitable employment is one of the most powerful predictors of emotional distress among migrants (Aycan & Berry, 1996).
- Society's perception of immigrants. Negative public attitudes are observed in higher rates of racism and discrimination at different levels (Galabuzi, 2001; Jackson, 2001).

- **Being adolescent or elderly at the time of migration and women from traditional cultures are also risk factors (Beiser et al., 1995).**
- **Children and youth are usually disenfranchised; they lack a powerful voice (social or political) within their ethnic community and in the larger society (Beiser et al., 1995).**

Protective Factors for Adolescents in General

The following protective factors have been identified, for youth in general, and for immigrant youth, in particular.

- **Supportive social policies such as universal health care, education, child care, prenatal and postnatal support, housing benefits, guaranteed minimal incomes, child allowances, tax laws that support parents that care for their own children, job sharing, flextime and compressed work weeks, parental leaves of absence after birth or adoption of a child, policies that support children's well-being (Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Peirson et al., 1999, p. 103).**
- **Strong social values such as support for social justice in the provision of resources, support for strong community structures, and respect for human diversity (Peirson et al., 1999, p. 103).**
- **Accessible and available resources and social support at the community level such as appropriate housing, caring school environments, and positive community climate (Peirson et al., 1999, p. 108).**
- **Positive connections with pro-social peers and with one or more adults outside the home (Carr & Vandiver, 2001).**

- **Commitment to school, academic achievement, participation in church and other civic engagements are critical resources in teens' struggles to forge new identities (Carr & Vandiver, 2001).**
- **Having safe places to go helps build a sense of belonging to a larger group. It develops feelings that they have their own contributions to make (Carr & Vandiver, 2001).**
- **Family structure, family cohesion, and positive family climate (Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Peirson et al., 1999, p. 114).**
- **Positive and open communication between parents and children (Peirson et al., 1999, p. 115).**
- **Effective coping and problem-solving skills at the family level (Peirson et al., 1999, p. 115).**
- **Positive parental relationships and positive parenting practices (Peirson et al., 1999, p. 116).**
- **Some of the protective/promoting mechanisms at the individual level are positive behaviour and temperament, intelligence, good problem-solving skills, social competence and a resilient perspective (Peirson et al., 1999, p. 119).**

Protective Factors for Immigrant Youth

- **Family is an important resource for promoting well-being and preventing emotional disorder. The concept of family often differs in many cultures. For some cultures family is just the nuclear family (mom, dad, children). For other cultures family is the extended family (grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins).**

Family plays an important role in each other's lives (Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Beiser et al., 1988).

- To have their families here (extended or nuclear) is a protective factor for immigrants. It provides emotional support, reinforces cultural norms, and offers constructive outlets for the dispersion of intra-familial tensions. However, if the family is reunited after many years of separation, the readjustment can be difficult. Nevertheless, studies have found that even within those difficulties, reunited families can cope better with the stress of adaptation than single or separated immigrants can (Berry & Kim, 1988; Beiser et al., 1988).
- Individual well-being depends on having meaningful ties to other individuals. People require a supportive social group in order to reaffirm their self-esteem (Bradley et al., 2001; Carr & Vandiver, 2001).
- Services offered by settlement and social support agencies are protective factors for immigrants. They play an important role in the initial stages of the migration process, bringing social support, connecting people with other members of their ethnocultural group and directing them to community services (Beiser et al., 1988; Kilbride et al., 2000).
- It has been documented that the presence of ethno-cultural community groups help immigrants in their resettlement. Their presence helps immigrants to replace the lost familial and social networks, and provides some of the practical assistance and psychological support which extended families provide in traditional cultures (Beiser et al., 1995; Beiser et al., 1988).

- A strong and established ethnic group helps to protect mental health mainly by affirming cultural and personal identity (Beiser et al., 1988).
- Religious institutions, for instance, reinforce personal faith which can act as a buffer to stress (Beiser et al., 1988; Kilbride et al., 2000).
- Being part of groups that share many common things provides immigrants with feelings of mutual support. This support is particularly critical during the early phases of resettlement. However, to depend exclusively on this support for a long time can be detrimental for immigrants. It can lead to isolation and alienation from the language, institutions, and the opportunities offered by the larger society (Beiser et al., 1988).
- Active participation in recreational and cultural activities, whatever they may be, enables immigrants to “let go” and “be themselves,” which is an important factor in the mental health of immigrants (Beiser et al., 1995).
- Another protective factor for immigrants is the numerical balance between males and females in their community. It is seen as an important feature of a viable community (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Beiser et al., 1988).
- English as a second language classes have been reported (Kilbride et al., 2000) to be effective in teaching students the language and providing them with a place in which they could learn how to integrate into the Canadian society.

Youth in Conflict with the Law

There seems to be consensus that apart from a temporary peak in the early 1990s, the level of police-reported youth crime in Canada has changed very little since 1980

(Carrington, 1999). Hepworth (1999) and Savoie (1999) report that the rate for youth charged with Criminal Code offences fell by 7% between 1995-1996, continuing a decline since 1996.

In reporting youth crime in general, some of the questions that arise is how crime is defined and the extent of its seriousness (Hepworth, 1999; Schissel, 1997). A report on youth crime (Schissel, 1997) shows that 45% of young offenders sent to jail between 1998 and 1999 were there for offences against property. Another 7.65% were there for crimes against themselves such as drug possession, sexual immorality and intoxication in public, while 26.5% were there for offences such as failure to appear in court. In his report, Schissel mentions that 79% or 2,100 of the 2,658 young offenders in custody in 1988 had not committed a crime against a person. He also mentions that offences such as obtaining money (drug dealing, break-and-enter) or material items (shoplifting) reflect that "the involvement of out-of-the-mainstream youth in illegal activities may be largely symptomatic of what they regard as an unrelenting struggle to make it on the street" (Schissel, 1997, p. 101).

Hepworth (1999) mentions that young people tend to be high-spirited and behave in ways that are sometimes viewed by the public and the law as delinquent but that such youngsters are not necessarily serious criminals nor will they become serious criminals" (p. 3). Schissel (1997) also argues that most youth commit crimes at one time or another and their crimes are transitory and involve very little harm. According to Schissel, much of the current youth crime is based on violations of the Young Offenders Act by rather harmless acts of vandalism and schoolyard antagonism (Schissel, 1997).

Schissel also argues that government statistics on youth crime group together many types of crimes and that statistics are based on police or court records and not on actual crimes committed. According to Schissel, statistics are based on “actual incidents” which means only crimes for which individuals are arrested. As a result, crime rates are an indication of the working of the justice system and how crime is defined and categorized. In his book, Schissel calls attention to the role played by the media in reporting and portraying youth crime, which in his opinion reveals society’s perception of youth crime.

In relation to the presence of youth crime in a particular ethnic community, Waters (1999) proposes that it has its origins in the migration process and in the socialization process of second-generation immigrant children. Waters also mentions that youth subcultures are found in any modern society, whereas immigrant subcultures are generated only by groups that migrate. Youth crime in immigrant populations do not result from “brutalization” learned as part of the specific historical circumstances of immigrant groups (Waters, 1999). The real causes, according to Schissel (1997), are in the connection between poverty and the fact that the marginalised are more vulnerable to commit certain stereotypical crimes, and more vulnerable to the scrutiny and control of the criminal justice system. Schissel conceptualizes the challenges of the young offenders in their socioeconomic and legal context, and argues that causes of youth crime are rooted in social inequality, the lack of support services for marginalised youth, and the reality of industrialized societies that dismantle social services on behalf of more profits.

C. On Crime Issues

Hester and Eglin (1992) describe how explanations of criminal behaviour have ranged from the biological criminology of Lombroso in the 19th Century to the psychological criminology of Eysenck in the 20th Century. Most of the theories were concerned with isolating the criminal individuals by identifying those characteristics which differentiated them from the “normal” person (Box, 1981, cited in Hester & Eglin, 1992). The biological criminology proposed that the difference was due to biological characteristics such as “biological inferiority, body shape, nutritional deficiency, chromosome abnormality and, when averaged out for racial groups, the size of genitals, buttocks and the brain” (Hester & Eglin, 1992, p. 5). According to Hester and Eglin (1992) psychological criminology looked at issues such as “extreme introversion and extroversion, a weak super-ego and riotous id, insanity, and a commitment to bureaucratic detail coupled with an opportunistic belief in messianic identity” as determinants of individual criminality (p. 5).

Hester and Eglin (1992) also describe and critique sociological theories of criminal behaviour, that go from locating the difference between the criminal and the normal person in the “character of the social environment to which the person is exposed” (p. 6) to the way correctional criminology perceives crime.

Social Construction of Crime

All societies develop ways of resolving conflicts, as well as a legal system that describes rules of proper and improper behaviour, and penalties for violations of these rules. Hester and Eglin (1992, p. 10) propose that the study of crime should consider two

fundamental axioms: first that “social action is intersubjectively meaningful and second, that crime is socially defined and relative” (p. 10). The authors draw on the sociological approaches of symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology and the part of structural conflict theory that provides an “interpretative-historical” account of crime for its study.

Components of the Canadian Justice System

According to the Department of Justice (1999), Canada’s system of justice respects individual rights while at the same time ensures that society operates in an orderly manner. According to the authors (Department of Justice, 1999), the law is a set of rules for society designed to protect basic rights and freedoms, and to treat everyone fairly. Laws must be enforced, interpreted and applied if they are to be effective. The justice system include institutions such as police, prosecution, courts, and correctional services in the process of administering justice (Department of Justice, 1999; Yeager, 1996).

The police fulfils the law enforcement mandate (Bala, Weiller, Copple, Smith, Hornick & Paetsch, 1994). They are considered “the front-line protectors of the society” and have a crime-control mandate concordant with law-and-order justice policies (Schissel, 1997, p. 27). It has been reported that the existence, growth, and popularity of the police are based on increasing the scope and intensity of law enforcement in specific geographic areas, as a response to public and political demands for crime control activities (Schissel, 1997). Police exert a great influence in producing images of criminality by releasing specific and select information on crime for the public, officials and media use (Schissel, 1997, p. 27).

On Sentencing

The courts are responsible for interpreting both private and public laws. It is where justice is delivered through the imposition of remedies, sanctions or penalties. Sentencing is considered the final and the most important step of the judicial process in the Canadian Justice System (Department of Justice, 1999). Sentences seek to rehabilitate the offender, ease the pain or loss suffered by the victim of a crime, restore social harmony, and demonstrate disapproval of criminal behaviour (The Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission [AJIC], 1999). As a process, its importance lies in the impact on the offender, the victim, families and the communities (Department of Justice, 1999). Its difficulty lies in the need to combine many factors such as human factors and the protection of society (AJIC, 1999).

Process of Justice Administration

In the process of administering justice, the court receives a pre-sentence report that provides information about the offender's background, circumstances of the offence, and the available sentencing options (AJIC, 1999). However, an inquiry (AJIC, 1999) found that courts use probation officers to gather information, but a high caseload on their part contributed to making the report inadequate. It meant that there is very little information available to the courts to assist them in making sentencing decisions.

The inquiry also found that there is no formal system that provides judges with feedback on the effectiveness of the sentences imposed in the past in deterring crime. According to the report, a judge makes sentencing decisions based on personal views, experience, and the judges knowledge of available sanctions and sentences other judges

have applied in similar circumstances (AJIC, 1999).

Canadian courts have at their disposal a range of penalties provided by the Criminal Code (Department of Justice Canada, 1999). Canadian criminal laws set out a range of penalties that include not only incarceration but a variety of sanctions such as an absolute discharge, a conditional discharge or a suspended sentence, probation (supervised or unsupervised), and a variety of alternative measures.

Probation can also include a variety of conditions, such as curfews, no contact with certain persons, residence at a particular address, counseling, community service orders and restitution orders. Other options include restitution (separate from probation order), a fine (from which the offender can enter a fine option program), and a period of incarceration (Department of Justice Canada, 1999).

On Incarceration

Another issue that the Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJIC, 1999) shows is that judges have no say as to which correctional facility a sentenced person should go to. It is up to the correctional authorities to decide where the offender will serve that sentence. The public often regards incarceration as a “real” sentence, while community sanctions are considered as some form of “leniency” (AJIC, 1999).

Incarceration, according to the same report, is not effective in rehabilitation or deterring offenders, results in bitterness, family breakdowns, loss of income, and the loss of educational opportunities. Rather than rehabilitate, correctional institutions expose offenders to conditions in which they develop habits and attitudes that leave them unable to integrate into society after serving their sentences (AJIC, 1999). The inquiry also

found that incarceration is one of the most expensive, most punitive, and least effective correctional measures because it ignores the needs of the victims of crimes and the possibilities of reconciling offenders with the broad community (AJIC, 1999).

Some reports (AJIC, 1999; Cameron, 2000; Canadian Center for Justice Statistics, 1999; Savoie, 1999) show that correctional institutions tend to be characterized by violence, punitiveness by correctional officers, strong antisocial sentiments among prisoners, tolerance of coercive homosexuality, and relatively poor social relations with staff and peers. They bring together criminals as well as offenders from a variety of backgrounds and provide opportunities for antisocial values and skills to be promoted. Inmates have every aspect of their lives regulated and are ill-equipped to cope in society without a sustained period of reintegration. With this evidence one wonders about the benefits that incarceration brings for youth involved with the legal system, especially for those youth whose main reason for going to jail was because they broke probation.

Need for a New Approach to Sentencing

The inquiry report “Alternatives to incarceration” (AJIC, 1999) argues that the actual philosophy of sentencing is one that punishes offenders, denies the relevance of culture, insists on incarceration for certain offenses, regardless of circumstances, and discounts the effect of community sanctions. The report mentions that both deliberate racism and more subtle systemic discrimination are involved in the justice system in regard to discretionary decision making power in charging, prosecuting, sentencing, and releasing. In relation to this issue the work of the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System demonstrates the existence of discrimination against

visible minorities by the system (Roberts, 2002).

The authors of the report (AIJC, 1999) propose a new philosophy in which there must be less dependence on the use of incarceration, and a strengthening of community sanctions and reconciliation programs. They suggest that cultural factors must be given greater consideration and the community must be allowed to play a more meaningful role.

In relation to incarceration, some reports (AIJC, 1999; Cameron, 2000; Canadian Center for Justice Statistics, 1999; Savoie, 1999) suggest that it must be used only in situations where the offender poses a danger to another individual or to the community; when any other sanction would not sufficiently reflect the gravity of the offence, or an offender willfully refuses to comply with the terms of any other sentence that has been imposed.

Crime Prevention

Crime prevention is considered by policymakers as a more effective and less expensive method of securing a safe society (National Crime Prevention Council Canada [NCPCC], 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). According to these reports, from a social justice point of view, harsh law-and-order programs ignore a fundamental consideration in understanding crime. Most repeat young offenders and their families are victims of privation and they have more than likely been repeatedly victimized by the systems of law, social welfare and education. The authors argue that knowing the background of victimization and privation is more compelling than the freedom-of-choice argument. This argument, in general, puts the responsibility of individuals' involvement in antisocial behaviours in the biological and psychological characteristics of the individuals

and in the choices they made in their lives instead of focusing the attention in the root causes of antisocial behaviour that lie, in large part, within the broad and social economic environment. Based on that, crime prevention activities are suggested as methods of securing a safe environment for all.

III

PROJECT FRAMEWORK

A. Theoretical Framework to Understand the Reality

This chapter is about the theoretical approaches I used in my attempt to understand the reality of Latin American immigrant youth involvement with the Canadian Justice System. According to Cuff and Payne (1984) theoretical approaches give particular ways of looking at the social world and enable researchers to develop a systematic and disciplined way of trying to understand aspect of it. The authors note that no theoretical approach has the ability to provide the complete “truth” about a social phenomenon and the answers we obtain are shaped by “our perceptions of the world, what we make of it, how and what questions we ask of it, and the concepts we employ” (1984, p. 4).

On Knowledge and Paradigms of Inquiry

Paradigms are about epistemology and philosophy of science (Creswell, 1998). According to Patton (1990, p. 37), a paradigm is “a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world.” How do people see the world? How do they perceive their reality?

According to Schutz (cited in Cuff & Payne, 1984, p.153) social actors view the social world through each individual’s own consciousness and it has to be interpreted and made sense of by each individual through their particular experiences. Schutz also mentions that this is not a “private” perception of the social world, it is common and shared by all socialized human beings in what he called “common-sense” knowledge

(Schutz, cited in Cuff & Payne, 1984, p.153). Marx (cited in Cuff & Payne, 1984, p. 93) believed that “knowledge was historically and culturally relative.”

Cuff and Payne (1984) mention that knowledge may be viewed, categorized and argued about in a number of ways. One way, according to the authors, is to attempt to think of the world by posing a number of questions such as the following:

- “What assumptions are being made, that is, what are the intellectual starting-points for such thinking?
- What sort of question are being asked?
- What sort of concepts are being used?
- What sort of methods are being use to find out about the world?
- What sort of answers or solution or explanations are given to the questions asked?” (p. 3)

With this study, I sought to understand the world view of Latin-American immigrant youth involved with the justice system. In seeking to understand them, I attempt to identify “what is important, legitimate, and reasonable” for them (Creswell, 1998, p. 74). I attempted to grasp the ideas, beliefs, motives and goals which move them to get involved with the Canadian justice system.

I regard the findings of the study as knowledge that is based on my conclusions and perceptions of what are the “important theoretical constructs that illuminate fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality” of immigrant youth (Cresswell, 1998, p. 75). My assumptions about the nature of the reality of immigrant youth participating in this study are generated from their opinions and perceptions; they also

reflect and incorporate my world view and biases about that reality. My world view incorporates all my experiences and perception of the world obtained through my formal and informal education, age, gender, work environment, ethnicity and immigration. Who I am and how I see the issue under study will be also incorporated in the study.

Phenomenological Paradigm of Inquiry

This study uses the phenomenological paradigm of inquiry. It is also called naturalistic inquiry by Guba (cited in Creswell, 1998). Researchers use qualitative and naturalistic approaches to inductively and holistically understand the human experience in context-specific settings (Patton, 1990, p. 37). According to Guba (cited in Creswell, 1998) a naturalistic inquiry minimizes the manipulation of the setting by the researcher, and replaces the fixed treatment/outcome, a characteristic emphasized in positivistic inquiry, with a dynamic process orientation. As a discovery oriented approach to understanding the nature of reality (Patton, 1990), the phenomenological paradigm of inquiry allows the outcomes to emerge freely, without constraining them on the part of the researcher. Then, the inquiry becomes a dynamic process (Mason, 1996).

Researchers applying the phenomenological paradigm are committed to understanding a social phenomenon from the actor's own perspective, focusing on capturing process, documenting variations, and exploring important individual differences in experiences and outcomes. The phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question "What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for this people" (Patton, 1990, p. 69). "Phenomenon" in this situation refers to experiences, relationships, job, emotions, program, organizations or a culture that are of importance

for the researcher. The researcher inquires into how participants experience the phenomena under study, and on what people perceive the reality to be (Taylor & Bodgan, cited in Patton, 1990, p. 57).

I apply the phenomenological paradigm, in my attempt to understand and interpret assumptions about the nature of reality of immigrant youth involved with the justice system. According to Guba (cited in Cresswell, 1998), the phenomenological paradigm requires that, through the research process, I answer questions dealing with the ontology, the epistemology and the methodology of the study.

The ontological responds to the question: What is the nature of the reality of immigrant youth involved with the Canadian Justice System? I consider participants' experiences and their perception of reality as meaningful research data. I set about to construct the nature of the reality of immigrant youth by different means. First, I identified, as valid data to construct their reality, participants' answers to the in-depth individual interviews and the opinions and insights of stakeholders of a Community Support Group.

I used also, as valuable data, the information on this issue gathered through conversations with parents and leaders of the Latin American community. I considered all of these data as a meaningful reflection of the reality of immigrant youth involved with the Canadian Justice System.

The epistemological aspect requires that I answer the following question: What constitutes trustworthy knowledge around immigrant youth involvement with the Canadian Justice System? Epistemology refers to "a theory of knowledge" (Dalton, Elias,

& Wandersman, 2001, p. 63). It means the study of how knowledge is constructed, what evidence is accepted as trustworthy, and what methods are acceptable to generate knowledge. In the generation of knowledge, it is also important to remember that the decision of what to study and how to interpret the findings are a matter of theory and values (Creswell, 1998; Dalton et al., 2001; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997).

I recognize that my choice of what to study and how I interpret the findings are influenced by my values. For instance, my experiences as an immigrant woman, mother of four children influenced my decision to explore the involvement of Latin American youth with the Canadian Justice System, because I care and I am concerned with everything that happens in the Latin American community, especially with the well-being of our children and youth. I chose a participatory action oriented approach because previous experiences in my country of origin led me to believe that people and communities have the strength and abilities to participate in decision- making processes that affect their lives. I also recognize that “pursuing objectivity and the ideal value-free neutrality in a research context is impossible, since participants enter the process with a subjective view of reality inherent to the human being” (Dalton et al., 1997, p. 63).

I acknowledge my subjective position and that of the participants around this issue. The acknowledgment of my subjective position helps to clarify that any prejudice or potential biases on the part of the participants and I are embedded in the research process and should be recognized in order to obtain a full understanding of the research. I consider their experiences, feelings and opinions as valuable knowledge of how they experience their reality. In order to get to a more complete understanding of their reality,

I present direct quotes from participants as part of the research results.

The contextualist epistemology approach claims that knowing is constructed out of the shared experiences, deeper understanding of a local and particular context, and the social connection between researcher and research participants in a particular time (Kingry-Westergaard & Kelly, 1990). Researchers using this approach are concerned with understanding the meaning of an event to the people who experience it, more than with the causes of their behaviours or cognition. Based on the contextualist epistemology, I set about to understand the meaning of the Latin American immigrant youths' involvement with the Canadian Justice System from the perspective of those who experience it.

The methodological aspect of the inquiry answers the following question: How should I go about finding knowledge about Latin American immigrant youth that have been in contact with the Canadian Justice System? Patton (1990) suggests that, methodologically, the researchers should do what he or she thinks makes sense, that is, "report fully on what was done, why it was done, and what the implications are for the findings" (p. 62). He also suggests to think inductively and holistically since the "whole is understood as a complex system that is greater than the sum of its parts" (p. 49).

Symbolic Interactionism as a Perspective for the Study of Crime

Theoretical approaches are different ways of trying to understand the social world. I use the symbolic interactionism approach as one of the frames of reference to study the participants' experiences with the Canadian Justice System. Symbolic interactionism is a social psychological approach most closely associated with George Herbert Mead and

Herbert Blumer (Patton, 1990). It is a perspective that places great emphasis on the importance of meaning and interpretation as essential human processes. People create shared meanings through their interactions, and those meanings become their reality (Patton, 1990).

The Individual and Society in Symbolic Interactionism

Cuff and Payne (1984) argue that in regard to the individual and society the symbolic interactionist approach assumes that:

- The organization of social life originates from within society itself as a result of processes of interaction between the members of society (p. 137).
- The impact of external factors in the shaping of social life depends upon the kinds of intelligent adaptation human beings make to them. External factors do not “in themselves” have any kind of direct implication for action. The effect of external factor will depend upon the understandings, beliefs and interests that people have (p. 137).
- The authors state that society is “assumed to be a relatively loose arrangement of quite heterogeneous groupings such as occupational, organizational, ethnic, class, status, political, religious and so on”(p. 137).
- Cuff and Payne also mention that the working of society involves the interplay of those heterogeneous groups. This interplay among the groupings is assumed to be competitive, and some of the groups “may acquire a measure of predominance and may take particularly advantageous position within the processes of social control, organization and communication”(p. 138). Although according to the

authors, “there is no a priori theoretical reason to expect any given group to take such an advantageous position” (p. 138).

Society as “Negotiated Order”

Anselm Strauss and his colleagues (cited in Cuff & Payne, 1984, p. 138)

conceptualized the organization of society as a “negotiated order.” The concept emphasizes the fact that society is continuously organizing. The members of society are constantly “arranging, modifying, re-arranging, sustaining, defending and undermining ” the conditions in which they live (p. 138). According to Strauss, members are “constantly involved in process of negotiation with one another or they make agreements on how they will conduct themselves as they reaffirm, revise, and replace these agreements over the passage of time” (p. 138). Strauss also points out that one characteristic of society’s negotiated order is its fluidity.

Symbolic Interactionism and Knowledge Development

Symbolic interactionism stresses an “action approach” to theory construction. This view is shared by qualitative methodologists such as Glaser and Strauss, Denzin, Blumer, Whyte, and Becker (Cuff & Payne, 1984). Most of their writings and discussions on qualitative methods emphasize inductive strategies of theory development in contrast to theory generated by logical deduction from a priori assumptions. According to those scientists, the theory-method linkage means that how you study the world determines what you learn about the world. As a symbolic interactionist, Blumer advocates a “naturalistic” approach to research. It involves the “examination of particular instances of social life as they occur in their usual settings, studied with some care and in

some detail.” (Cuff and Payne, 1984, p. 124).

Blumer proposes that the researcher should aim for a “sympathetic and sensitive understanding of people’s general outlook on the world, and to see how processes can be seen as organized patterns of conduct and social interactions across the span of daily experience” (cited in Cuff & Payne, 1984, p. 124). Based on those premises, Cuff and Payne (1984) identify the following characteristics that should be present in research. These characteristics reflect basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism as an approach to study the social world:

- The authors mention that “the individual’s sense of self is often formed, defined and affirmed within the world of occupational life” (p. 126). They mention that for this reason some studies of the social world have focused on aspects of occupational life especially the “observation of processes through which any institution operates” (p. 127).
- Cuff and Payne (1984) indicate that symbolic interactionism focuses on the “location of social processes which they take to be descriptive of, and applicable to, a variety of different social settings” (p. 127). The authors argue that general statements about the world would be obtained from “formal” generalizations derived from “a detailed qualitative study of particular occasions”(p. 127). In this way studies of the social world through symbolic interactionism show a preference for formal generalizations.
- Cuff and Payne (1984) indicate that there is a preference within symbolic interactionist to develop research with groups that are not able to speak for

themselves to the public at large. The researcher takes the side of the “underdogs” in so far as he seeks to explain the elements of “normality” present in their lives, therefore “upgrading” their public image (p. 129).

- Cuff and Payne (1984) state that in some situations the research aims to demonstrate that there is an element of logic in the way things are organized in specific settings such as hospital, jails, monasteries. The research brings out the rationality of the organizational behaviour in those settings (p. 131).
- Cuff and Payne (1984) describe how members of society define their circumstances and respective identities, but also how actors examine the way in which community defines some of its members as unworthy of continued participation in its daily life”(p. 135).
- According to Cuff and Payne (1984) “unless one knows what people think we cannot understand why they behave as they do”(p. 136). Cuff and Payne mention that people act as they do on the basis of the circumstances as they define them; they act as they do out of their beliefs and understanding. It means that the researcher should be aware of people’s thoughts, feelings, emotions and views.
- Cuff and Payne (1984) state that the last assumption for understanding the social world through symbolic interactionism is that “research should be both intensive and typically accomplished through the acquisition of a detailed and rich acquaintance with the life, circumstances and ways of those being studied” (p. 137). It implies the use of qualitative methods.

Symbolic Interactionism and the Study of Crime

Blumer (1969, cited in Hester & Eglin, 1992) asserts that the study of crime using the symbolic interactionism approach rests on the following premises:

- “Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meaning that the things have for them”(p. 11).
- “The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows”(p. 11).
- “These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters”(p. 11).

In the context of the study of crime, Hester and Eglin provide the following explanations for the premises: “The first entails the view that whether a given act is criminal or not depends on the meanings which are attributed to it; the second means that in the course of social interaction persons may construe each other’s behaviour as criminal, and the third premise means that what particular meaning is conferred or constructed depends upon how the act is interpreted by the parties to the interaction” (p. 11).

Hester and Eglin (1992, p. 12) maintain that in accordance with these premises, symbolic interactionist studies of crime “focus on the examination of the processes (and contexts) of social interaction whereby (and in which):

- certain forms of behaviour become prohibited by criminal law, that is the process of crime definition through legislation;
- certain acts and persons become subject to law enforcement, that is, the

process of crime selection by the police;

- certain acts and persons become fitted with the label “criminal”, that is, the process of crime interpretation by the courts;
- criminal identity is developed, maintained and transformed” (Hester & Eglin, 1992, p. 12).

Alternative Paradigms in Community Psychology

Community Psychology is about understanding how context influences individuals (Dalton et al., 2001). The field of Community Psychology is concerned with the “understanding and enhancement of the lives of individuals and of community life, with social and community problems, with the relationships of the individual to communities, and with how social systems affect the lives of individuals” (Dalton et al., 2001, p. 5). The main goal of Community Psychology is wellness, which is advanced as an ecological concept. The optimal development of the concept requires an “integrated set of operations involving individuals, families, settings, community contexts, and macro level societal structures and policies” (Cowen, 1996, cited in Prilleltensky et al., 1999). An ecological and contextual approach to health and wellness considers multiple levels of analysis (Prilleltensky et al., 1999).

The Ecological Approach to Health and Wellness

The ecological approach to health and well being sustains the need to take into account the interrelationships among multiple levels of analysis--individuals, microsystems, organizations, localities, and macro systems that shape a phenomenon (Levine & Perkins, 1997; Dalton et al., 2001, p.11). According to Kelly (cited in Levine

& Perkins, 1997, pp. 120-130), the interrelatedness among groups of individuals and the environment is governed by the principles of interdependence, cycling of resources, adaptation and succession. The environment, within the ecological context, consists of the physical and social aspects that influence individuals' behaviour, their well-being and development. Organizational interrelationships include "social rules, customs, and laws that govern access to resources that might limit people's opportunities, restrict freedom or protect individual rights" (Levine & Perkins, 1997, p. 121). Kelly also mentions that the concept of interrelatedness and the principles of the ecological paradigm provide a holistic view of the reality of a phenomena when approaching problems in a community setting (pp. 111-148).

The ecological approach assumes that it is "possible to change patterns of social and organizational relationships to achieve programmatic effects on the lives and adaptations of people" (Levine & Perkins, 1997, p. 112). In the ecological perspective the researcher works for the "development of a greater variety of problem definitions and to examine a greater variety of solutions, one of another of which will serve the needs of different segments of the population" (Rappaport, 1981, cited in Levine & Perkins, 1997, p. 112). I use the ecological paradigm as a framework for analysis of the social context in which the Latin American youth of this study build their relationships, learn their behaviours and acquire their values. I expect that the analysis and interpretation of the experiences of Latin American youth from a holistic point of view will provide evidence of the interplay of socioeconomic and cultural factors in shaping the life of children and families (Levine & Perkins, 1997, pp. 111-148).

B. Research Approach

Qualitative Approach

Qualitative methods are “oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic” (Patton, 1990, p. 44). They are known for yielding “insider knowledge that is deep, rich, and contextual” (Dalton et al., 2001, pp. 89-100). For the above reasons, qualitative methods become a natural fit for a symbolic interactionistic inquiry.

My decision to use qualitative methods in this study was based on the knowledge that qualitative methods are known for helping to develop a useful understanding of culture and community issues (Kidder & Fine, 1997). The ethnomethodology approach pays attention to the production and recognition of social action in particular situations or settings (Hester & Eglin, 1992, p. 15). It places special care in how participants within the settings locally produce or accomplish order. Garfinkel (1967, cited in Hester & Eglin, 1992, p. 14) asserts that people produce and recognize “sensible” social actions and settings making them “accountable” or “observable-reportable.” Ethnomethodology in this way, “seeks out what participants in particular settings are oriented to and how those features enter into their perceptions, actions and accounts” (Hester & Eglin, 1992, p. 15).

Qualitative methods that allow one the use of participants’ accounts of their experiences are also useful in attending to unheard voices of groups not often studied or understood and for providing an understanding of the personal experiences of members of a community and the interplay of multiple factors in community life (Hughes, Seidman & Williams, 1993; Kingry-Westergaard & Kelly, 1990). Qualitative methods are also

“useful in describing a phenomenon of interest, and in refining categories or techniques for later development of quantitative measurement” (Dalton et al., 2001, pp. 89-100).

Following the approach suggested by Patton, holistically, I set out to obtain detailed information about this social phenomenon that concerns members and parents of the Latin American community; I focused on understanding what stakeholders have to say on the issue. In this regard, rather than just using the participants’ perceptions and opinions, I also gathered the perceptions and opinions of the Community Support Group, and parents and members of the Latin American community. Inductively, from these data emerged categories or dimensions of analysis (Patton, 1990) as I came to understand patterns that existed in the empirical world of the participants of the study.

Participatory Action Research

Action research aims at solving specific problems within a program, organization or community (Patton, 1990, p. 157). Action research, explicitly and purposefully, becomes part of the change process by engaging the people in the program or organization and studying their own problems in order to solve those problems (Patton, 1990, p. 157). Community Psychology claims that “knowledge is constructed through action,” and that “findings from research are used to develop theory and guide further action” (Dalton et.al., 2001, p. 114). In advancing these ideas, the researcher’s role is understood as one that is “participant-conceptualizer actively involved in community processes while also attempting to understand and explain them” (Dalton et al., 2001, p. 11). A participatory research strategy ensures the advancement of these concepts.

I involved the members of the Latin American Community in the planning and implementation of the study through the organization of the Community Support Group. The role of the group was to guide and support the research, recognizing the community members' expertise and practical understanding of the Latin American community. I shared control of the research with community members and participants by taking into consideration their questions and suggestions. I gave information on the findings to participants and members of the CSG. I asked for their feedback as a way to ensure the validity of the information and to foster collaboration and democratic participation. I was also constantly checking that my approach to the study and my relationship with the setting responded to the core values of Community Psychology of "individual wellness, enhancement of a sense of community, social justice, citizen participation, collaboration and community strengths, human diversity, and empirical grounding" (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997, pp. 166-184; Kidder & Fine, 1997).

The Promotion-Prevention-Protection Continuum

The promotion-prevention-protection continuum developed by Prilleltensky et al. (1999, p. 11) is a helpful tool that "shows families along a continuum that ranges from adequate functioning to the need for intensive protective services." Prilleltensky et al. mention that there are populations for whom the policy or program is designed to reach and measures to cover different levels of action from "pro-active universal policies and programs for all, pro-active high-risk approaches focused on a subset of the population, to reactive approaches dealing with an even smaller subset of the population" (p. 11).

I used the promotion-prevention-protection continuum theoretical approach to

organize the participants' suggestions for crime prevention and rehabilitation activities obtained from this study.

C. Research Context

Immigrants in Waterloo Region

As of 1996 (The Regional Municipality of Waterloo, 1998), 86,370 newcomers (mainly from Europe, Asia, South America and Central America) had settled in Waterloo Region, comprising 21.56% of the total population of the Region. According to this report, in the last two decades the Region has become home to people coming from many different places such as Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania, India, Vietnam, El Salvador, China, Somalia, Guyana, Bosnia, Iraq, and Portugal. This cultural and ethnic diversity is reflected in the more than 50 different languages, other than English and French, spoken at home (The Regional Municipality of Waterloo, 1998).

The Latin American Community in Waterloo Region

The Latin American community in Waterloo Region is composed of people born in any of the Latin American countries and of children of members of this ethnic group. As an ethnic group, Latin American people share things in common such as language and culture but may differ in areas such as religion, economic status, education, country of origin, gender, and political views.

Latin Americans from Chile were the first to arrive in Canada around 1973. Central Americans started arriving in the early 1980s. Kitchener-Waterloo is home to approximately 4,000 Latin Americans, of which 1,603 come from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras. The rest are from Chile, Peru, Mexico, Colombia,

Argentina, and Cuba, among other countries (The Regional Municipality of Waterloo, 1998).

Most of the Latin Americans of Kitchener-Waterloo have arrived as refugees or refugee claimants or have been sponsored by family members in what it is referred to as the family reunification category. Many Latin Americans have been victims of torture, lived in refugee camps before coming to Canada or have been victims of traumatic experiences as a result of the political situation in their country of origin.

Organizationally, the Latin American community has some political, religious, support and recreational types of organizations by country of origin. They respond in some way to the needs of the community. However, there is not a formal organizational structure that represents the interests of the whole community.

Immigrant Youth in the Study

Purposefully, I used two sampling strategies to select my sample: the “maximum variation sampling” and the “snowball” strategy (Patton, 1990). In applying the “maximum variation sampling,” I selected a small sample of nine Latin-American youth who have had an experience with the Canadian Justice System. To achieve the criteria of “a small sample of great diversity” (Patton, 1990) I selected participants that met the following criteria:

- members of the Latin American community
- willing to participate in the study
- minor criminal offences as breach of the law category
- between 12 and 18 years of age

- male and female
- immigrated to Canada in the last 10 years
- living in Waterloo Region

To ensure the maximum variation possible within the sample, I kept a record of the above characteristics of each participant, making sure that all of them combined met as many of the above criteria as possible. In using this strategy, I aimed to capture and describe the shared patterns that cut across cases. The patterns obtained are significant to the study since they emerged out of the heterogeneity of the sample. The “snowball” strategy (Patton, 1990) is an approach for locating information-rich cases or critical cases by asking key informants or “knowledgeable” people to identify information rich-cases. I used this strategy in the identification of the cases to be interviewed

D. Methodology

Reaching Participants

Immigrant Youth

I followed different procedures to reach participants. I prepared a flyer, in English and Spanish, with an open invitation for Latin American youth to participate in the study. I sent the flyers to agencies that work with immigrant youth and to places where the Latin American community meet such as Latin American stores, churches, and groups. Members of the Community Support Group also distributed flyers within their social contacts. I also contacted other community agencies working with immigrants, parents and people who initially brought the issue to my attention.

I received more than 23 referrals as a result of the activities described above. In a

follow up phone call to each person that was referred, I explained the purpose of the study and the importance of their participation in the study. Following the phone calls, I sent the information letter that explained the study (Appendix 1). Several days later, I called them again and we set a time for the interview with those who agreed to participate. From the twenty three referrals, nine accepted to be part of the study.

Community Support Group

When it was time to organize this group, I contacted the people that brought the issue of youth involvement with the Canadian Justice System to my attention, and I requested information from them on who in the Latin American community would be interested in being part of a support group for the project. I also contacted members of my social network. Nine members of the Latin American community accepted the invitation. I provided them with a letter explaining the thesis project and a copy of the thesis proposal as well as an invitation to a first meeting.

Key Informants

The opinions and perceptions of other key informants such as parents and service providers were included in the study as a result of a recommendation from the Community Support Group. Initially, they were not considered as part of the study proposal, but after I presented the findings to the CSG, they saw the need to obtain the opinions and perceptions of these stakeholders. It was perceived that the study would benefit from this information since it would provide a more complete picture of the phenomenon. With this rationale in mind, I called some of the parents whose children I had interviewed and asked them if they would be interested in talking about their

perceptions. Of the two parents that accepted to be interviewed, one is a single-parent with three children. The other parent came as a refugee claimant. The other two key informants are service providers from community agencies working with youth in general, and immigrant youth in particular within their clientele.

Data Collection Procedures

The information was gathered using qualitative methods of data collection such as in-depth individual interviews, notes from the meetings of the Community Support Group, and informal conversations with members of the Latin American community at large. Part of the data used in the study is the literature review presented in Chapter II. It was helpful in my understanding and analysis of the phenomena.

Immigrant Youth: Individual Interviews

Data from immigrant youth were obtained through individual in-depth interviews, using the questionnaire shown in Appendix 2. This questionnaire follows the format of a general interview as described by Patton (1990).

Each interview lasted from one hour and half to two hours and they took place in locations selected by each participant. They provided privacy and safety for participants. Before the interview, I took time to review the purpose, goals and objectives of the study with the participants (Appendix 3). I gave them information about issues of privacy and confidentiality, procedures to follow during the interview, and how I was going to manage and store the data. I asked participants for permission to tape-record the interview and to take notes during the interview. I also asked them to sign a consent form (Appendix 3). After the interview, I listened to the tapes and reviewed the notes made

during the interview. If I felt that I was missing something, I contacted the participants immediately, in order to get additional information.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, all the data related to the study (participants' records, written material from the interviews, tapes, and copies of the raw data) were stored in a safe place. I was responsible for handling and storing those records.

Data from the Community Support Group (CSG)

The data here consisted of the observational notes I took during meetings, the recording of informal conversations with group members, and the feedback provided on specific processes such as the role of the committee, guidelines for working together, and meetings. I also regarded as important and valuable data the suggestions and feedback that members of the committee provided at the individual level, and the information generated from my conversations and informal meetings with community leaders, parents, and staff working with the agencies serving immigrants.

Data from Informal Conversations with Key Informants

Another source of information I used in this study was data gathered through informal interviews with two parents and two staff persons from community agencies working with immigrant youth. Although the information gathered from these interviews was helpful in obtaining a complete picture of the phenomena of youth involvement with the legal system, these opinions or perceptions are not the central focus of the study. I use them only to reinforce a special situation related to the immigrant youth of this study.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Analysis of Data

Following the directions of the phenomenological paradigm, I began the data analysis open to what participants shared during the interviews. I reviewed the raw data from each participant looking for emergent themes (Kidder & Fine, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I focused on identifying specific issues, observations, and quotes from each participant. I summarized them in an individual summary that provided me with a full understanding of the singularities of each case. I went back and forth from each individual summary to raw data in order to come up with themes and patterns, commonalities and differences.

Once I did the analysis of each case, I organized their answers into discrete categories that responded to the research questions. Then, I did a cross-case analysis with the purpose of identifying patterns that capture overarching issues among all participants. I built general patterns across cases and came up with the themes related to all, as well as those unique cases that showed differences. In this way, according to the phenomenological paradigm (Patton, 1990), I grasped an understanding of the multiple interrelationships among dimensions that emerged from the data without making prior assumptions (Kidder & Fine, 1997; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Interpretation of Data

I regarded as meaningful and trustworthy data on the subject of the study all the information gathered from meetings, interviews from participants and comments from community leaders and parents. I considered it as meaningful knowledge since it is built

from the many forms of personal and community experiences (Dalton et al., 2001; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) of the different stakeholders involved in the study. In this way, what makes up the reality of immigrant youth involved with the Canadian Justice System emerged from the multiple stakeholders' perceptions and interpretations regarding the issue. The collaboration of researcher and participant in qualitative studies allows clarification of what participants meant by their responses to questions (Dalton et al., 2001).

Trustworthiness of the Data

In working with qualitative and inductive approaches, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that researchers should use credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as criteria to assess the trustworthiness of the data, since objectivity is impossible to achieve in studies using qualitative and inductive approaches. Following I explain how the study satisfies these criteria.

Credibility according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) refers to the extent one's results represent the true experience or the phenomenon under study. They suggest that one should seek triangulation as a way to demonstrate credibility. Patton (1990) suggests the use of triangulations as a way to ensure that all participants' perspectives have been considered. The author mentions that triangulation contributes to the verification and validation of qualitative analysis (1990). Denzin (1994) cited in Patton (1990) identified four basic types of triangulation: data, investigator, theory, and methodology triangulation. Data triangulation allows for a cross-data examination that further reduces the possibility of bias in the data and supports the validity of the study.

In this study I address validity by using triangulation of different methods such as: individual interviews, observations, comments from the Community Support Group, and my personal notes on the process. It gave me a multiple perspective on the phenomenon under study. I deal with validity also, through the cross-data examination of the individual interviews with the purpose of contrasting the different viewpoints of the participants on specific issues. I gave participants (youth and CSG) a summary of the findings with the purpose of validating the information and requesting additional feedback they may have regarding the study. No feedback or comments were provided by youth. The Community Support Group on the other hand, made some recommendations which were incorporated into the process of the study.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applicable to another context or settings. They suggest that because qualitative studies are time and context-bond (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) researchers need to provide rich description of the conditions under which the study took place. Patton (1990) mentions that the thick description generated by qualitative research affords in-depth analysis of an issue by subgroups that are often overlooked in quantitative analyses of larger samples. Patton also notes that this depth of experience lends credibility to the findings of a qualitative research.

In this study, I describe the conditions of the study, characteristics of the participants and the processes I follow in the study. When applicable I use direct quotations to capture people's personal perspective and understanding of the issue and its processes. Participants' quotes give meaning to what they have gone through which

contributes to the credibility of the study. Describing my findings in this way may help others looking for explanations of similarities or differences in my results.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also recommend to assess the trustworthiness of the data by measuring its dependability and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1995) suggest that because it is impossible to maintain objectivity in qualitative studies, one should be able to demonstrate the rationale and process underlying one's findings. It means ensuring that the findings are consistent and verifiable. Dependability and confirmability are usually ensured through the use of an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As part of the process of the study, I kept a journal where I recorded the procedures I followed during the analysis and interpretation of the data. Keeping track of the procedures provided a framework for checking the validity and accuracy of the procedures as well as the reasons and the rationale for my decisions regarding the analysis. This paper trail was helpful when I needed to go back and forth to confirm what people said on a specific issue. It was also helpful in reducing uncertainty and providing effectiveness and value to the study.

By working in this way, I expected to reduce potential bias that may have occurred, since built into the research is the explicit recognition that my perceptions and understanding of the issue are also part of my data. I also acknowledge that I may have brought into the study my personal interests and understanding of the issue. These are the lenses through which I may have filtered my data collection, interpretation and analysis (Kidder & Fine, 1997). I addressed my bias by continually re-evaluating my personal values such as attempting to be accurate and fair, taking care of distinguishing among

evidence and what was my personal interpretation and opinions, and being careful in selecting and presenting the information generated by participants.

Relationship with Participants in the Research Process

Values

I made sure I was fair, impartial and honest in all my dealings with participants. In my relationship with them I applied the following values. I did my best to respect the dignity of the participants, independent of issues of culture, ethnicity, colour, race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual preferences, physical or mental abilities, age, socioeconomic status, and/or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or status (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997; Wilfrid Laurier University, 2001). I acknowledged the participants' worth as human beings by paying special attention and respect to their knowledge, insights, and the experiences they brought to the study. I also recognized, as an essential component of my relationship with participants, their right to privacy, self-determination, and autonomy. In my relationship with them, I also abstained from practices that might be perceived as discriminatory. To that effect, I provided procedures for informed consent and confidentiality that were consistent with those rights.

Ethical Issues in the Research Process

Ethical issues related to the research were addressed in the following way. I obtained an ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of Wilfrid Laurier University before I began the study. I encouraged participants to seek as much information as possible on the study before making a decision to participate. In this venue, I informed them of the purpose, rationale, goals, objectives and methodology of the study through

the information letter (Appendix 1). The letter provided contact names and phone numbers where participants should call if they needed more information about the study.

Those individuals who agreed to participate in the study signed an informed consent form (Appendix 3). Through the consent form, the participants and I agreed to the following: to conduct the study under certain conditions that will protect their privacy and confidentiality, to ensure the validity of the study, and to protect the researcher against further legal action. I took special care to explain to the participants that a signed consent form means that they acknowledged that they received information on the dimensions under which the study was taking place, that they understood what was explained, and that they were signing without coercion. The consent form describes the responsibilities for both, participants and researcher; the benefits, risks and consequences of participating in the study; the option to refuse or withdraw at any time; and how the researcher will use the information collected from the study. The form also describes the period of time over which the consent applies, and how to rescind it if desired.

I respected the participants' right to privacy by asking for their consent to explore and collect only the information pertaining to the purpose of the study; to conduct the interviews in a setting that offers privacy and confidentiality and to transcribe the tapes and keep all the records, both written and unwritten (tape recorded) locked in a filing cabinet. I let participants know that names and information that could identify participants would be removed from the records.

I found ways to handle the information provided, securely and ethically, in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Participants were advised that I was not

going to include in the study information viewed as confidential by participants. They were notified that the only case in which their confidentiality may be broken, is if he or she is in danger, or in the process of being judged in a criminal court, and I am being called by a court order to disclose information on their activities. I also made sure that participants understood that I will not be responsible for a breach of confidentiality outside the study due to disclosure by participants and their family members or other community members related to their cases.

IV FINDINGS

I present the findings of the study in two main sections. The first section presents the voices of nine immigrant youth on issues related to their experiences as newcomers, perceptions of their involvement with the Canadian Justice System, and perceptions of their needs for support and services. The findings of the project are organized around the research questions that guide the study. The second section summarizes the process of community involvement in the study through the Community Support Group (CSG). This section also describes the perceptions of two parents and two service providers on the issue. Although the focus of the study was not on the perceptions of parents and service providers around the issue, I felt important to add this information. In my view, it allows me to understand how the issue is perceived by other stakeholders, contributing to grasp the reality of the involvement of immigrant youth with the Justice System from a broad perspective.

Section 1: Voices from Immigrant Youth

First, I wanted to know the participants' perceptions and opinions regarding the migration process. I was curious whether their experiences differ or corroborate what has been reported in the literature on this issue. The second question is related to immigrant youths' experiences and opinions related to their involvement with the Canadian Justice System. I wanted to know what they perceive as the main causes of their involvement, how they suppose it will affect their future as members of Canadian society, and how

they observed that their families, friends and community react to their involvement. The last research question in this section explores the support available for immigrant youth in the community.

A. Voices from Immigrant Youth: Perceptions of the Migration Process

The research question “How do Latin-American immigrant youth perceive their migration process?” guided this area of the study. I organized the findings in the following areas: participants’ background, participants’ perception of the migration process, challenges adapting to the community, and perceptions of needs for support.

Participants’ Background

Nine youth from the Latin American community participated in this study (six male and three female). Participants came from countries such as Mexico, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. All of the participants have been living in Canada between 6 and 12 years. As a result of political and socio-economic struggles in their countries of origin, three families of the children in this study came as immigrants, five as refugees, and one as refugee claimant. According to participants some were forced to leave their country of origin due to the political violence or threats to the life of some family members. Others came looking for a better life.

All the participants, but one exception, immigrated together with the rest of their family members. The exception is the participant whose family came as refugee claimant. This person was able to join his family, only after five years of separation. That was the time it took his family to be granted the legal status of refugee. During those five years, he was living in his country of origin with members of his extended

family.

The ages of participants range from 15 to 19 years old. Two groups were identified within the sample: those who came very young (4-5 years old), and those who migrated at an older age (11- 13 years old). Seven out of nine participants attended a catholic school, and the rest went to a public school. From the sample three dropped out of school, one because she became pregnant, and the other two because they did not like school. At the time of the interview, they were back at school finishing their high school.

Three out of the nine youth interviewed are members of a single-parent household with the mother keeping the children after the parents separated. Three of the participants were kicked out the house when they got in trouble with the Canadian Justice System. All of the participants identified themselves as a member of the Latin American community and feel proud of its culture.

Participants' Perceptions, Experiences and Feelings Regarding the Migration Process

Appendix 4 "Participants' Experiences, Perception and Feelings Regarding the Migration Process" identifies the migration experience as a demanding process that posed cultural, emotional, and psychological demands. Participants identified the migration process as "highly stressful, painful, and a confusing experience" independently of the legal category under which they arrived in the country. It seems that age at the time of migration has an effect on how participants perceived the migration process. Participants that came to Canada at an older age, 11-13 years old, describe the experience of coming to a new country as a "very hard time." This first period, when they did not understand

and could not communicate, was labelled as “confusing,” “very difficult,” “you don’t know what to do...nobody tells you things,” “everything is new... and strange.”

Participants from this group also mentioned that the migration process is a demanding process in the way that “it requires you to learn fast and in a short time a lot of stuff.”

Two of the participants from this group said that at that time they did not know if they had the skills and strengths to face the challenges of adapting to the host country.

Participants who came very young (4-5 years old) did not remember any special experiences, perceptions, or how they felt coming to a new country. They talked mostly of their experiences going for the first time to kindergarten, learning the language and the culture just like any Canadian-born child. All of them commented upon not having problems communicating or understanding the language and the culture. They mentioned having friends from different cultural backgrounds, but all of them feel better in the company of kids from Latin America.

Participants spoke of differences between their past experiences in their home country and their present circumstances in areas related to traditions, food, clothes, people, and surroundings. The perception of these differences was the cause of emotional discomfort for some of the participants. “It was like a bomb...the effects [on me] were very strong...nobody spoke Spanish...the food, the culture...even the weather is different.”

The migration process generated anxiety and feelings of loneliness and powerlessness among participants. Going to school, immediately after arriving in the country, was the experience that produced more anxiety to participants who came at an older age. “I was scared of going to school...I felt embarrassed to be there and not

understand what was going on.” “when it was time to go to school, I usually felt a weird feeling in my stomach.” Feelings of frustration are shown in situations where participants felt powerlessness:

“I felt frustrated...I didn’t understand what was going on,” “I was shunned at school...I was seen as a stranger...as different,” “I felt isolated,” “It was like you were a ghost...like there was a wall between them and me...like I was invisible...they ignored me,” “I felt like an idiot.”

Some of the participants also reported contradictory feelings regarding their migration process. Some were “happy to be living here,” but at the same time they regretted coming here: “I didn’t want to come... I liked it better there [back home]...I had friends. I missed them.” Participants refer to feeling “confused and a little guilty of missing things back home.”

Age at the time of migration had an effect on how participants were able to adapt. One of them felt that “the older you get here the more difficult is to adapt...you are more set in your ways.”

Challenges of the Migration Process

Participants’ perceptions of challenges regarding the migration process were categorized according to individual, family, community and society levels.

Individual Level

At the personal level, learning the language was identified as the main and most important challenge for participants who came as older children. Participants correlated their mastering of the language with their increased capacity to understand the new

environment and their ability to face the challenges of living here. Some participants were able to learn the language very quickly, which made them more comfortable in their new environment. “Suddenly, one day I understood what they were saying and I was able to talk back to them....Boy!...That made a big difference!”

For other participants the process of learning the language was more difficult, took more time and made them feel uncomfortable: “It took me more than a year to understand what was going on ... All that time it was very difficult ...I felt very uncomfortable going to regular classes when I didn't understand anything.”

Family Level

Participants noted that challenges they face at the family level as a result of the migration process are related to changes in relationships among family members, perceptions of the host country by parents and children, and the shift in cultural values among family members.

Changes in Relationships Among Family Members

There are two perceptions of how the migration process affects family relationships. Participants that came as older children mentioned that for the first time everybody in the family is at the same level, and face the same demands: learn a new language, make new friends, understand the new culture, and find their own space in society:

“My parents had to go to school too...to learn English...at that time, everybody was in its own little world,” “Everybody was busy trying to adapt . . . busy learning the language...then my parents started looking for jobs...They didn't

have time to deal with every one of our problems. You are on your own."

The situation for the participant whose family came as refugee claimants was more stressful, due to the fact that family reunification occurred after many years of separation.

I didn't see my family for five years ...I was 11 years old when my mom left...I was 16 years old when I came. I met my baby sister for the first time [here]. My mom and I were like strangers...I wasn't the son she left any more and she wasn't the mom I knew...It is like when you meet a new friend...You start [to] open up little by little...to know each other again.

This person mentioned that being left behind made him "feel abandoned," "not worthy." He also said that even though he has been living with his family for more than three years now, he still feels "like a stranger at home ...that nobody cares."

Three of the participants mentioned that communication among family members became limited or non-existent due to the demands of the adaptation process. "We didn't talk too much...we were busy learning English," "I couldn't tell my parents the problems I was having at school because, how were they going to help me if they didn't speak the language?... I spoke better English than they [did]."

Shifts in Cultural Values among Family Members

All of the participants have been part of or have observed conflicts among family members. For participants, the main reason for conflict is rooted in the understanding and application of family values and norms. They talked about difficulties in getting along with their parents, especially when parents expected children to behave and act according to the values and norms of the Latin-American culture. "My parents want to

keep things the way they were back home,” “we were still living back home and not in Canada.”

All of the participants mentioned that their parents complained of not being able to discipline their children “like in our countries” due to Canadian rules; they also complained that due to parent’s restrictions, they were unable to behave as “Canadian kids do.” This situation created problems and conflict within the family, because parents want to raise the children under the values and cultural norms known to them. In general, participants perceive their parents as “confused about what they can do to with us in this society.” They mentioned that some “parents see the Canadian society as a threat,” and feel “threatened” by what they perceive as Canadian values (too much freedom, children do not respect authority).

Community Level

School Setting

Participants' experiences with the school system diverged according to their ages at the time of migration, how fast they learned the language, and how welcoming and supportive the school environment was to them. Two participants that came as older children said they learned the language in a very short period of time. For these participants, being able to communicate in English was one of the reasons why they felt welcomed and good at school. One of them said "After I learned English I felt very good at school. The students were very friendly, the teachers were good ... I like it a lot... everybody was friendly and welcoming. It made me feel better in school.”

All the participants who came as older children identified English as a Second

Language (ESL) classes for newcomer kids as the best support system. They mentioned that teachers of ESL classes were “very supportive, patient, helpful.” Teachers took time explaining things to them. It was in these classes where they made friends with other immigrant children and felt “accepted.” For them “ESL teachers were the best.”

Unsupportive School Environment

The rest of the participants that came as older children had difficulties learning the language. One of the participants in particular commented that the lack of English skills made him uncomfortable communicating with others, which influenced his choices of subjects at school. “On purpose I choose classes where I did not have to speak or write essays.. I choose math, gym, mechanics, carpentry.”

Most of the participants that came as older children were enrolled in a grade lower than the one they had already completed in their countries of origin. Some participants also reported being called “dumb” or “stupid” because they didn’t understand what was required of them. They also mentioned that some kids made fun of them because of their accent. As a result of these experiences, participants mentioned feelings of “detesting school” or being “scared of going to school.” The school environment was perceived by this group as not welcoming and not inclusive for newcomers. The following situations were described:

“You can be beside a group in your class, and they didn’t acknowledge you.”

“Other immigrants were the only ones who would talk to me... So we had to stick together.”

Another factor that made participants feel unwelcome at school was the fact that

some teachers were not supportive of their needs. According to participants, some “teachers did not have enough time to help you...Some teachers will ask....do you have any questions?...but if you don't speak the language, how can you let them know that you don't understand?...so you don't say anything.” One of the participants said that teachers expect that newcomer students “learn everything at once and fast like the rest of students, but nobody is there to help you out.”

A different but common pattern was found among those who came very young (4–5 years old). All of the participants in this category grew up here. They have done all their schooling in Canada, and seem to have incorporated Canadian values, norms and standards into their lives. Some of them have not been back to their country of origin. Canada is the only country they recognize as their home country. In relation to the school environment, all of the participants in this group disliked going to school. The reasons were that school does not provide them with incentives, or enough motivation. Common comments were “School is boring... It didn't provide incentives,” “The teacher doesn't motivate us...Other kids don't like it either,” “You go there because you have to, not because you like it.”

Peer Relationships

All the participants mentioned “the need to belong,” “to fit in.” To fill these needs, participants associated with other students at school. It was common that those who came at an older age chose their friends among other newcomer kids, especially those from the same culture. Participants who came at a younger age, on the other hand, made friends with kids from other cultural backgrounds, even Canadian-born kids, but

they also felt more comfortable with kids of their same culture. Both groups agreed that “immigrants stick together at school. Portuguese with Portuguese, orientals with orientals, black with black, Spanish with Spanish.” As a group they stuck together and helped each other.

Peer relationships played an important role in the socialization process of participants in this study. The relationships with other newcomer kids helped participants to feel secure and be part of a group in an environment where their identity was overlooked or dismissed.

I felt alone...the only group that was open to me was of immigrants. ...so I stuck with them...they were the only ones that accepted me...for other kids ...it was like I was a ghost.

Participants perceived Canadian kids as “cool...but not friendly... they do not accept you easily.” Friends play many roles for participants; they became confidantes and were seen as family by one of the participants: “I trust them. I do things with them. I told them things I don’t tell my parents. I don’t know what I will do without them.”

Some of the participants recognize that peer relationships were beneficial for them in breaking social isolation at school, but at the same time some of the activities in which they engaged as a group were a source of problems for them.

I have good and bad friends . . . the good ones help me to learn English and help me with homework . . . with the others we play soccer and every time . . . after the game we drank a lot . . . If we won the game we drank, if we didn't, we still drank. Well, in one of the games, one big guy was

beating my friend . . . he is very short . . . so I defended him . . . I kicked the guy . . . we fought . . . someone called the police and they charged me with assault.

Some participants also gave as a cause of involvement with the system the peer pressure from their friends:

I went to a store...a friend of mine was there. He asked me to pass a CD for him ..I did it. He took it and he left the store running...I was surprised ... then the security guard at the store caught me because I was there ...I explained to him what happened. But he didn't believe me . . . he called the police and they charged me.

I felt alone at school . . . I started hanging out with this group . . . they were the only ones that talked to me . . . they were immigrants too . . . one day they told me to bring a weapon to school, because we had to defend ourselves . . . to protect ourselves.

Latin American Community

Fragmentation and Group Differences

All of the participants identified themselves with the Latin American culture, which is perceived as "something you have ...that supports you." They referred to the Latin American community as "fragmented." When exploring this perception, one of the reasons provided was that people are from different Latin-American countries which have the same language, culture, religion in some cases and lately, the political struggles.

However, as one of the participants mentioned, "it doesn't mean that we are the same . . .

people.” For instance two participants commented that “people from the South [America] think that they are better than people from Mexico and Central America....it is discriminatory in some ways.” Participants also explained the issue of fragmentation as a result of previous experiences in their countries of origin, and the perception that people “gossip a lot” also makes people “keep to themselves.”

Lack of Organization

There was also a recognition of the lack of organization among members of the Latin American community, although participants were aware of initiatives such as church groups, sports associations, senior groups, and cultural associations. These are groups, mostly run by volunteers, that respond to community needs. The lack of representation at different levels of organization in the community was attributed to the lack of a community agency that links together people from all Latin American countries.

Lack of Voice and Representation

The lack of organization, according to participants, contributes to the issue of not being heard at other levels. “Maybe because we are from different countries we do not look for ourselves...like the Chinese... the Polish.” “Everybody has their own groups but there is nothing that represents us. Like for example, the Portuguese have their own club, their own parties.”

Society Level

Most of the participants like to live here because they feel safe compared to what has happened in their countries of origin. However, participants perceived that Canadian society stereotypes and discriminate against immigrants. One of the stereotypes

mentioned was that “People make assumptions...For example they assume that if you are black, you are dumb. If you are Japanese or Chinese you are good for math...Latinos ...they are going nowhere.”

They also mentioned that “Canadians expect immigrants to be like them as soon as we get here... but you don’t get a lot of help.” Participants felt discriminated against by the way people treat them: “There is discrimination, they treat you differently because you look different . . . sometimes people are very sarcastic.”

B. Voices from Immigrant Youth: Involvement with the Canadian Justice System

The findings of this section answer the research question: “ How do Latin-American immigrant youth perceive and manage their involvement with the Canadian Justice System?” I organized the findings to show the perception of immigrant youth regarding the causes of their involvement with the Canadian Justice System, their experiences dealing with the system, and how they perceive their own reactions and those of parents, friends and the community to their involvement. I start the description of findings in this section by listing the type of offenses committed by participants.

Offenses Committed by Participants

The participants’ involvement with the Canadian Justice System ranged from shoplifting under \$500, assault, possession of a weapon, drinking and driving under age, vandalism, and robbery. Three of the participants did time in prison, and another is still waiting to go to court. This participant fears the possibility of doing time in prison, due to the type of offense perpetrated. Four of the participants recognized having alcohol and anger management problems.

Causes of Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System

Appendices 5, 6, and 7 “Causes of Immigrant Youth's Involvement with the Canadian Justice System as Perceived by Participants, Parents, and Service Providers” respectively, show how these stakeholders perceived the causes of youth's involvement with the system. Most of the participants described the need to be part of a group, isolation, drinking and anger management problems, and low self-esteem as causes for their involvement. Most of them got involved because they were not able to say no to their friends, got involved in fights defending their friends, or thought that what they were doing was just a “prank ... to have fun.”

In relation to other causes, one of the youth identified family issues as causes of his involvement with the system: “I dropped out of school as a result of family problems...I was really angry at that time...I had unresolved family problems...I went into a drinking binge. I didn't go to school.... they charged me for drinking and driving under age.” Poverty and failing to comply with the terms of probation were cited by some participants as causes of their involvement and further entanglement with the Canadian Justice System. A case that started with a school yard fight progressed to the person being sent to jail as a result of his failure to adhere to the terms of probation.

Consequences of Breaking the Law

Appendix 8 “Consequences of Involvement with the Canadian Justice System” shows how participants perceived the impact that being involved with the Canadian Justice System will have in their lives. Some of the participants recognized that breaking the law will have repercussions in their lives. Others do not know what the consequences

will be. Some of them hope that the experience will not affect their lives since their records will be destroyed when they reach 18 years of age. Until that happens, they are afraid to go looking for jobs because “If I want to apply for jobs .. It will be shown there [in the police record].” These participants were positive that there will not be any future repercussion in their lives. Their belief stems from the fact that the type of offence they committed was a minor offence for which they were sentenced to community hours or educational courses.

For those who are older and whose involvement brought them to prison, they perceived that their involvement has brought consequences that have affected their lives. Expressions such as “It has affected my life...now I have a criminal record . . . It is difficult to get jobs or go to college because people see it [the criminal record] and it is a barrier” were mentioned.

Reactions to Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System

This section presents the reactions of different stakeholders to immigrant youth involvement with the Canadian Justice System as perceived by participants.

Own Reaction

Appendix 9 “Participants’ Reactions to their Involvement with the Canadian Justice System” deals with participants’ own perceptions. They show different perceptions of the experience. For most of them the experience was “a stupid thing I did. It was a learning experience.” From their opinions, it is clear that once they were in contact with the system they got scared, mostly because they were afraid of not knowing what would happen. Some said they felt intimidated and did not believe what was happening to

them. Only one of the participants commented that she does not regret what she did. “I felt odd...I did nothing wrong...she got what she deserved. I don't regret it.”

Three of the participants felt angry, two of them because they were charged, although in their words, they were not the ones starting the fight: “I was angry to be there because I was defending my friend...and I was the one being punished when the other [person] initiated the fight...I just reacted.” The other person got angry because nobody believed his side of the story: “They charged me because I was at the store...they wouldn't let me explain my side of the story. I felt really mad. I didn't know the guy's intentions.”

Parents' Reactions

Appendix 10 “Families' Reactions to Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System as Perceived by Participants” shows how participants perceived their families' reactions to the issue of their involvement with the Canadian Justice System. According to participants' perceptions, some of the parents were initially “angry...upset.” Some parents felt “ashamed” when they learned of their children's involvement with the Canadian Justice System. However, after the “initial shock” they were “supportive,” helping the children in getting professional advice from a lawyer and accompanying them to court. Those whose families were supportive felt grateful that their parents did not react by “kicking me out of the house as other parents do.” They told stories of friends whose parents leave the children on their own once they learn of the children's involvement with the Canadian Justice System.

In this study, three families reacted very strongly. According to participants, their families were so upset and angry that they kicked them out of the house. In one case, the

participant had not seen his family while he was in prison. At the present time he is on probation and back at school. His mother is the only person from his family that sees him once in a while. The rest of the family is still very upset with him. Most of the participants whose families did not speak to them or kicked them out of the house said that they felt “abandoned,” “feeling very bad...like I was the worst criminal.”

Friends’ Reactions

In Appendix 11 “Friends’ Reactions to Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System as Perceived by Participants” I grouped participants’ perceptions of their friends’ reactions. According to participants, some of their friends were supportive when they knew of their difficulties with the Canadian Justice System because some of them were also in the same situation. One of the participants reported that he lost his friends’ trust for awhile. They became suspicious: “I felt they won’t trust me with something valuable in their homes.” Others noticed that some friends of the family were disappointed with them when they learned about the situation.

Community Members’ Reactions

How participants’ perceived the reaction of the community is shown in Appendix 12 “Community Members’ Reactions to Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System as Perceived by Participants.” Some participants expressed that the community stereotypes immigrant youth as

“troublemakers”, perceive them as “suspicious” automatically blaming them:

“Being immigrant..like people kind of expect us to get in trouble. People automatically blame us...immigrants...instead of white people...because they think

Canadians wouldn't do that .. Is [sic] other cultures."

Participants' Perceptions of the Canadian Justice System

The findings in this section answer the research question: "How do Latin-American immigrant youth perceive the Canadian Justice System?" Appendix 13 arranges into groups the participants' perceptions about police, court proceedings sentencing, and correctional services.

Police

Participants complained of how police treated them. Some of them felt that police officers perceive immigrants as "troublemakers." Some of them complained of being "harassed by police" and one mentioned being unjustly "beaten" by a police officer when he was brought to the police station. He contemplated pressing charges, but the lack of money to pay for a lawyer to handle the case made him forget about it. Others mentioned that they perceive police officers as "racists." This person said, "I dislike cops...I don't trust them. I felt they are racists. There is a lot of discrimination." The same participant felt that there is prejudice among some police officers: "They expect Blacks and Hispanos [sic] to be criminals."

Court Proceedings

The majority of participants felt that they were treated fairly by people at court. However, there is the perception that people at court "do the job for what they are being paid for...they do not care about if you are from another culture." Although the Young Offenders Act prescribes that youth are to be fully aware of their rights and privileges (Department of Justice Canada, 1999), only one of the participants mentioned having

previous information on what can happen at court. This person knew because the police came to the school and talked to them about the problems they can get into if they break the law. This participant was the only one who knew the procedures that the Court will follow with his case. The rest of the participants did not have previous information on how the Canadian Justice System works, nor their rights and responsibilities.

The Young Offenders Act also prescribes that youth be accompanied by parents or guardians. However, the participants' experiences in this area can be described in three ways. In some cases participants went alone to court because they did not tell their parents about their problems with the system. This happens with participants older than 16 years of age. They were able to keep this information away from their parents, at least for some time, because once a person is 16 years of age, the system considers him/her mature enough to manage his/her own affairs independently.

Another situation mentioned was when participants did not tell their parents because they were afraid of their parents' reaction or situations in which the parents were so upset with their children that they did not go with them to court. In these cases, participants went alone to court and did not have any other type of legal and moral support.

The third situation mentioned were cases in which the parents of the participants went with them to court, but did not understand what was happening there. In these situations participants had the moral support of their parents, but the lack of information in their own language made the process difficult to understand for their parents because "Nobody tells you what to expect...how the system works...and everything is in English."

The language and cultural barriers as well as the lack of knowledge of the judicial system did not allow parents to support their children effectively.

Sentencing

Most of the participants in this study perceived their sentence as fair. Those convicted of shoplifting were granted sentences that ranged from community hours, to writing letters of apologies, to attending educational courses at the John Howard Society. Cases in which probation was granted involved some type of restriction, such as prohibiting seeing the other members of the group and visiting certain places, and the obligation of reporting to the police officer every so often.

Of the participants that went to prison, one was directly sentenced to jail. He did his time there, and now he is on probation. The other cases started with the persons getting community hours. For different reasons they got involved in fights or broke the terms of probation. They were charged and again they broke the terms of probation. At the end they were sentenced to time in prison. Two of the participants in this study who were sent to prison perceived their time in jail as "living in hell.. you are there with all kind of people ..I felt afraid...scared...lonely." "It was like being in a cage [the prison]. I said to myself I am not coming back here."

The other person did not share a lot of information about the experience at prison. The participant appeared hurt, resentful, and angry "I felt angry to be there [in prison]. I spend my time there alone...or exercising." This person does not have any relationship with the family as a result of the involvement with the justice system and practically has been abandoned by them. At the time of the interview this person was living with some

friends.

Alternative Measures

Alternative services were perceived in different ways. Participants who were asked to write letters of apologies or were sent to do community hours felt relieved that they came out of the experience without further consequences. Participants sent to educational courses or group counseling were not satisfied with how both services were provided. They mentioned being on a waiting list for a long period of time before they were able to attend the service. Once they were there, they felt that both services did not meet their needs as immigrant youth.

One of the participants had to wait six months to attend a course, which in his opinion “was not helpful at all. You go there but there are a lot of other people talking about their experiences...I don’t like that...why I have to talk about myself in front of people I don’t know?...I did not say anything while I was there.” This participant also mentioned that his family stepped in and enrolled him in individual counseling which he felt has been helpful. Another participant felt “out of context in the course” which was mostly attended by Canadian kids. He felt that if he talked about his experience as an immigrant, they would dismiss him and would not pay any attention. After a while this person decided to be there but not say anything.

All of the participants who have been on probation said that this measure did not help them in any way. Some of their opinions were: “with probation....they give you more rope to hang yourself.” “Probation does not accomplish anything since the only thing you do is report yourself to the probation officer.” Participants perceived probation

as a way of control, a measure that does not have any educational purposes.

According to participants, probation does not intend to make people reflect on what they did. For example, one of the participants said that alcohol and managing his anger were his main problems. The terms of his probation prohibited him from visiting places where alcoholic beverages were served. He said, "I am young ...I wanted to go out with my friends... they caught me." As a result, he broke probation several times which got him more and more into trouble because every time he broke the terms of probation he was charged again. According to this participant the root causes of his involvement with the system were not addressed.

Participants' Feelings

Participants in this study talked about the feelings that the experience of being charged awoke in them. Some of them felt scared, not knowing what would happen to them. "My friend and I were crying. I was very nervous." Others felt intimidated by the proceedings and they could not believe that they were actually in front of a judge. One of them said, " It is intimidating to be there [in court]. I couldn't believe I was there...It made me feel bad...I felt more for my parents...they were disappointed and embarrassed to be there."

C. Voices from Immigrant Youth: Perceptions of Need for Support and Prevention Activities

The findings in this section respond to the following question: "What are the needs for support of immigrant youth in general, and specifically of immigrant youth involved with the Canadian Justice System?"

Immigrant Youth's Perceptions on Needs for Support

Appendix 14 describes the youths' quotes regarding their need for support and services. I organized their answers according to an ecological level of analysis.

Individual Level

At this level, participants' quotes are related to their need for services to help them solve personal problems such as drinking and anger management. They requested programs that respond to the cultural needs of immigrant youth. Participants also mentioned the need to "bring tutors from your own culture to help you with homework" and "organize youth groups run by youth" as examples of the type of services that would support immigrant youth in their adaptation process to the Canadian society.

Some of the youth mentioned that there were situations in which the services for youth involved with the justice system were there but the waiting list was very long or the participants felt that the service "didn't help" them with particular problems. Three of the participants suggested involving youth, especially those who have been in trouble with the law, in the delivery of services. They mentioned "bring someone to explain what are the consequences in your life if you get in trouble..someone who have had the experience." The participants mentioned that having someone who has been in trouble with the system talking to youth could help prevent the involvement of youth in unlawful activities (Appendix 14).

Need for Information

The youth identified the need for information about Canadian society in general, particularly how the Canadian Justice System works, as one of the most important needs

at this level. They mentioned being unaware of what are their rights due to lack of information. Only one of the participants knew about what could happen to people who get in trouble with the Canadian Justice System because the police came to her school and talked to students about it. The rest of the participants were unaware of “things that can get you in trouble” and perceived their whole experience with the legal system as “intimidating.” Participants also observed that the information has to be “delivered in our own language and adapted to our cultural needs” in order to be useful for the Latin American community.

Family Level

At the family level, participants' quotes (Appendix 14) identify at least three main issues: support and better communication among family members, parents' involvement with the school system and type of support and services for the entire family.

Family Support and Better Communication

In general participants felt that their families need to be more supportive of their children, to talk to them, and to show children that they are really appreciated. Some of the participants mentioned that their parents don't know what is going on in their lives.

Some of the participants' quotes were:

“show kids you do really care...work with them...listen to them,” “work with children since they are little,” “encourage children to get an education,” and “teach kids not to be ashamed of your heritage..be proud of who you are.”

At this level participants also recognized the need to improve the communication among family members. They also suggested that parents need be able to recognize when

there are problems at home and to be open to seek help. Participants also mentioned as very important the need to “look for ways to address violence in the family.”

Parents' Involvement with the School and Community

Participants would like their parents to be more “involved at school and the community” and to link with other members of the Latin American community. One of the participants suggested “celebrate things together as families in your own ethnic group..make them feel part of your group.. be proud of their origins and heritage”

Support and Services for Families

The youth participating in this study felt the need for parenting courses as well as the need to support families whose children are in trouble. Participants indicated that the entire family need to be explained, in their own language if possible, the situation in which the youth is involved, the effects, the implications and the procedures followed by the Canadian Justice System. Some suggestions were

“run information sessions for parents,” “support families whose children are in trouble” “explain in different languages the effect and implications if the person do not comply with the sentence [probation]”

According to participants, it may help families in their understanding and supporting of children that are in problems with the Canadian Justice System.

Community Level

The community level section of Appendix 14 presents some of the participants' quotes related to need for support and services at this level. I organized them in the following issues.

Increase Awareness in the School System of the Needs of Immigrant Youth

In general participants made reference to the lack of support system for immigrant youth as well as the need to address issues of racism and discrimination in the school system. Some of their comments were:

“teachers and school counsellors should be aware of the cultural background of students,” “create support systems at school for newcomers children, ” “create ways of communication with parents of immigrant children, ” and “look for ways to address issues of racism and discrimination at school.”

In the area of need for support and services related to immigrant youth involved with the Canadian Justice System, the youth of this study stated the need for “support after school programs for all children but especially for youth in problems with the law”and “access to recreational services and after school activities.”

Need to Preserve the Latin American Culture.

All of the youth were very proud of the Latin American culture, “that’s is something you have to rely on.” Most of them urged parents and the Latin American community to celebrate and appreciate the cultural heritage of the group. Some of their suggestions were:

“Celebrate things together as family in your own ethnic group,” “teach kids not to be ashamed of your heritage,” and “ Be proud of who you are.”

Need for Community Organization and Participation

According to participants, the Latin American community needs to collaborate and participate in looking for ways to prevent children's involvement in unlawful activities, and to support youth who have been in prison. In order to do that, it was suggested that the community needs to "educate us in the Canadian ways: what our rights are, services, laws," and to "learn about services for youth in the community."

There seems to be the perception that the lack of information on how the legal system works, and the perception of the Latin American community as "fragmented" both contribute to making community involvement in solving this problem very difficult. Community organizing was mentioned as a way to have representation and voice and to "find ways to denounce racism and discrimination."

Societal Level

Appendix 14 also shows the youths' perceptions of needs for support and services at the societal level. I grouped them in the following issues: the need for information that targets both service providers and consumers, the need for services that respond to the needs of ethno-cultural communities, and the need to search out the root causes of youth involvement with the justice system.

Need for information

In general all of the participants agreed that both service providers and newcomers need to learn about each other. Service providers need to learn about newcomers, their culture and the challenges they face integrating into Canadian society. Newcomers, on the other hand, need to "educate ourselves in the Canadian ways: laws, health, work, what

our rights are”in order to better adapt to the country, “to learn more about the Canadian Justice System.” Participants also specified that information for recent immigrants should be provided in their own languages whenever possible.

Services

Participants observed that some services are not adapted to the needs of immigrants or are difficult to access for different reasons. Some of the comments were that “services in general should change the way they are provided...probation doesn’t help” and that “there are services what is needed is coordination..integration.”

Three of the participants suggested that the Canadian Justice System should hire staff that represent the ethno-cultural diversity of the community in order to be more accessible to the needs of these populations. This issue was perceived as especially important for them, their parents, and family members who do not speak English well.

The use of cultural interpreters was discussed in some cases, but according to one participant it is more important “to have people who understand your culture in the police, the court...because they will understand you better.” This person also mentions “it is not enough just to use translators...someone who speaks the language and is from the same culture can help provide the cultural perspective to those involved in handling the case.”

Other suggestions were the need to “involve youth from all cultures” in the organization of services for immigrant youth, to “create community organizations that run seminars or programs that capture youth creativity..like computers courses ..something they [youth] do not find at home or school” and to provide places such as a “Latino

Coffee House where you can play games.”

Root Causes

In this area participants mentioned the need to address “root causes.. family violence.. why children have too much free time”. Other comments were related to the need to address poverty, racism and discrimination at all levels. According to one participant what is needed is “justice in the justice system.”

Immigrant Youth’s Suggestions for Prevention Activities

The findings of this section answer the question: “What are the participants’ suggestions for crime prevention activities?” I used the participants’ perceptions and opinions and organized them into suggestions for activities along the promotion-prevention-protection continuum theoretical approach (Prillelstensky et al., 1999). This approach establishes the need for measures to cover different levels of action: from “pro-active universal policies and programs for all, to pro-active high-risk approaches focused on a subset of the population, to reactive approaches dealing with an even smaller subset of the population” (Prillelstensky et al., 1999 p. 11).

Pro-active Universal Approaches to Prevention

Policies and Programs for All

Based on the analysis of the situation of immigrant youth and their perceptions of needs for support there seems to be a need for policies that enhance the social and economic well-being of the whole population and of immigrants in particular. Suggestions in this area can be the improvement of the universal health care system, taxation laws that decrease social inequalities, and policies that address socio-economic

determinants. Especially important are policies that address poverty of vulnerable groups: low income families, single-parent families, recent immigrants, refugee claimants, women, seniors and people that belong to minority groups among others.

There is also a need for policies that address barriers to the entry of immigrants into the labour sector such as accreditation of educational credentials, retraining in their area of expertise, training to improve their job marketability, and coordination among the four institutions that play a role in accrediting professionals who graduated outside Canada: educational institutions, government agencies, accreditation bodies, and employers. There is also the need to enforce policies dealing with racism and discrimination in this area.

Pro-active High-Risk Approaches

Suggestions in this area focus on a subset of the population. They include the following:

- Government should restore and maintain funding for ESL classes.
- Government should allocate funds to create community support systems for immigrant families, especially for those at risk.
- Service providers should engage in institutional change processes to develop culturally accessible programs for immigrants.
- Service providers should develop monitoring systems to evaluate accessibility to services and resources by immigrants.
- Educational institutions and service providers should collaborate in developing and implementing on going participatory action research on access and equity issues affecting ethno-cultural populations.

- **Government should allocate resources to support the community organizing efforts of ethno-cultural communities.**
- **Service providers should develop initiatives to include representatives from ethno-cultural communities at all levels of organization.**

Reactive Approaches

According to the theoretical approach, suggestions for action in this area deal with an even smaller subset of the population. In this study, the subset could be recent immigrant youth who are dealing with their adaptation process. Suggestions for prevention activities could include the following:

- **Develop and implement a support system for recent immigrant children and youth entering the school system.**
- **Encourage parents' participation in decision-making processes that affect their children.**
- **Develop parenting courses for immigrant parents in their own language and adapted to their cultural needs.**
- **Provide information in their own language and adapted to cultural needs on issues related to the Canadian Justice System.**
- **Develop services to support the needs of immigrant youth in problems with the Canadian Justice System.**
- **Improve and support positive communication between youth and adults.**
- **Support youth involvement in positive peer relationships.**
- **Promote community development initiatives to increase immigrant youth**

participation in decision-making processes.

- **Develop activities to encourage more positive, balanced and realistic images of youth in the media.**

Section 2: Voices From Community Stakeholders

The participatory action research focus of the study allowed the contributions of members of the Latin American community (represented in the Community Support Group), two parents, and two service providers of Latin American background working with community agencies. The findings in this section are organized along the following areas: community concerns, perceptions, feelings and opinions and perceptions of the Canadian society.

A. Community Concerns

The participatory action research process followed in the study gave a voice to the concerns of community members. These concerns are related to the lack of services for immigrant families, the hidden racism they perceived at different levels (accreditation of professional qualifications, work, study, access to services such as childcare, housing, and recreational activities among others), and the challenges of the migration process.

A lesson from this process was the difficulty of getting participants for the study. I had many referrals for the study, some of whom were 16 years of age or older. In respect of cultural and ethical norms, I had to ask permission from the parents before interviewing them. In some cases, participants initially willing to participate, abstained from it because their parents did not allow their participation. After a lengthy process I

was able to obtain the consent of nine youth.

The unwillingness to participate was discussed with committee members and we came up with the following conclusions: The family felt ashamed because their children are in trouble with the Canadian Justice System. For some, the issue is regarded as a reflection of lacking parenting skills. They think “it reflects badly on them as parents.” Cases in which parents reacted very strongly, even “kicking the children out of the house when the children became involved with the Canadian Justice System,” were mentioned. Kicking the children out of the house is viewed as the “last measure,” because parents are just “fed up” with the children’s behaviour. One of them said, “It was problem after problem...I kind of expected it ...and when it happened, it became the last drop to fill the glass.” One of the service providers mentioned that

“parents blame themselves...they feel guilty...but I haven’t found families who were not worried about their children’s future. Each family loves their children and wants the best for them...It is a self-defense mechanism not wanting to talk about the experience.”

All these reasons, according to the Community Support Group, might explain why families in those situations just want to forget about their children’s experience. Their attitude seems to be “If I don’t talk about it, it didn’t happen.” It could also explain why it was very difficult to obtain consent to participate in the study.

B. Perceptions, Feelings and Opinions

Parents’ Feelings

The two parents interviewed reported feeling distressed and worried. They

specifically worried about what will happen to their children: “I worried about my daughter’s future,” but they were also afraid of the social connotation that their children’s involvement with the Canadian Justice System would have in the family as a whole. Especially, parents were afraid of losing what in their opinion was their social status in the community: “I don’t know what’s going to happen to us,” “What will my friends think of my son going to court?” Both parents reported that because of their children’s involvement with the system, they are aware of other youth with the same problem whose families keep silent about the issue. Some of the reasons for their behaviour according to them are: people are afraid of the stigma attached to the family if someone was in jail; they are afraid of what the rest of the community will think of them as a family once you talk to someone about it. Some comments were:

“They are afraid that if they disclose the problem when looking for help, it will become common knowledge.” “It is a reflection of how good we are as parents...if my son is getting into trouble and everybody knows it in the community...that’s the worst thing that could happen to a family... it is cause of shame.”

The two parents mentioned that in general, parents of youth in this situation felt hopeless, angry or blame themselves for what happens to their children. Common comments were:

“ I was kind of expecting it ...I was very angry at her...because I keep telling her that she will get in problems...but she did not listen. ” Some parents also feel guilty or frustrated at the way Canadian society treats youth: “If I haven’t

divorced my husband maybe it wouldn't happen." "You can't discipline your child here...they just call 911...so, what can you do?"

Perceptions of Causes of Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System

Members of the Community Support Group as well as the two parents and the two service providers interviewed mentioned societal issues such family violence, family breakdown, single-parent families, poverty, the lack of ongoing support for immigrant families, and systemic discrimination and prejudice as factors that link together as root causes of youth involvement with the Canadian Justice System.

Family Violence

One of the service providers mentioned that domestic violence has an effect in how children behave. This person mentioned that: "In some ethnic groups the expression of anger is completely normal...the expression of aggression is completely normal...parents from those cultures has been socialized in that way...here there is zero tolerance...it became very hard for parents to adopt other values, to act in other ways...they need support...to sort of learn new behaviours."

Family Breakdown

This issue was a concern not just for the two parents but also for the two service providers and members of the Community Support Group. The families of three of the youth in the study were in this situation. One of the parents interviewed believes strongly that: "Separation affects children...raising children alone is more difficult...children need both parents." Although this person felt that

"children and youth need good examples from their parents," she believes that,

“if the parents are fighting all the time...if the marriage is not working...I think is better to divorce...so the children are not getting bad examples...or witnessing family violence...is better to.”

This parent also believes that youth are having problems at school and with the system because parents are divorced or separated. She said, “that is my case...since I divorced my husband, my children became rebellious..they take advantage of me...they starting acting out.”

Single-Parent Families

This issue links directly to socioeconomic concerns such as the lack of services and support for immigrant families. One of the parents interviewed said: “being a single-parent means that all the responsibilities of raising my children are mine.” This person mentioned feeling tired, overworked, and with a lot of pressure and stress in her life. The lack of a social support network to support single-parents families is evident:

Some days I have to bring my youngest child to school, then drop the other two at the elementary school...then I go to work. When I come back from work...I am tired,...and I still have to do all the house chores...when I realize it is 11:00 p.m. and I just want to sleep...I felt very tired all the time...I don't have energy left to check what my children are doing...or to discipline them...they know that...they misbehaved.

Socio-economic Concerns

As well as with the factors explained above, there was agreement among the Community Support Group, the two parents and the two services providers on the effect

of poverty as a root cause of youth involvement with the Justice System. For one of the parents interviewed the lack of money and the lack of support to raise their children is what she perceived as one of the difficulties of being a single mom.

I work the whole day but I don't earn enough money...I can't enroll my children in after school activities because there is nothing left after I pay the bills...In Summer it is very difficult...the children are not at school...they stay at home watching TV or fighting among them....they get bored....but what I can do? If I enroll my son in soccer, it costs \$150.00 per season....but what about the other two? I don't have \$450.00 just for summer activities...I know they need that...but it is impossible for me.

One of the service providers felt that poverty is a pressing issue among immigrant families. In her opinion, “some parents work full time or part-time in low paid jobs where the amount of money that they received is limited...parents do not have enough economic resources to provide for their children.”

Lack of Community Support

The lack of support for immigrant families was mentioned by one of the service providers. This person mentioned that “the main root is societal...we can not blame new Canadians...we can not blame parents...they lack resources...they are segregated from resources and opportunities...they are powerless...if we want them to succeed we have to provide on going support ...it is not just to bring families here...and then dump them in Kitchener-Waterloo...to fend for themselves.” Families, according to this member of the Latin American community, do not realise that “in a way we all are responsible, as a

society, for what has happened to that youth.”

Societal Causes

Some people at the Community Support Group as well as some parents and service providers perceived the causes of youth involvement with the system as societal. One of them said, “Forget the blame victim approach ...think of the problem as a societal.” Because the causes are broader and encompass the socioeconomic level there are the perceptions that initiatives to address the problem should include systemic changes as well as immediate causes. It means providing immigrant families with chances to access resources and opportunities to enter into and participate actively in Canadian society. It means “more support to immigrant families, access to resources...not just tell parents it is wrong...give them options.”

Ethnic communities need to be supported and respected by the system. “If we bring them here, we are responsible for them...for all the support they need.” Some measures suggested by participants to address the problem were: organizational changes at the political level that address the needs of immigrants, supporting ethnic communities in their social development, increasing resources for translation and the use of interpreters, and changing hiring policies at the services level. These would support ethnic minorities in their involvement in Canadian society.

The Community Support Group said “as parents we are worried of how our children spend their time...but how can we pay for recreational activities if we are just getting by? How can we get other sources to fund programs for them?.”

Perception of the Canadian Society

Systemic Discrimination and Prejudice

The systemic discrimination to which immigrants are subjected in every day life and how the media portrays immigrants were mentioned by both service providers as societal causes of immigrant youth involvement with the Canadian Justice System. One of the service providers said:

“discrimination is there...in the way we provide services...how we put barriers to the incorporation of professionals graduated outside Canada...but also in other things.” The same person said: “sometimes I think that when kids form groups or gangs it is a way for them to survive a hostile environment...the problem is that it also contributes to label them and to develop prejudice against immigrants.”

Understanding of the System

Participants from the Community Support Group, the service providers and the parents interviewed perceived that the system does not support the efforts of families in disciplining their children. The parents interviewed felt frustrated by the way Canadian society allows youth to be independent at a young age while undermines, in their opinion, their efforts to parent their children. Some of the comments in this area were:

“Here once your child is 16 years old, you cannot discipline them ...they can choose and do whatever they want...so what can parents do?. ” “I you want to discipline them...they call 911 and then...you are in trouble,”

“You know as a parent that they are in trouble...you try to talk to them...but if you are very strict it is worse.. they left the house and go live

by themselves collecting welfare...I don't agree with that....lack of discipline."

There was also the perception that for parents in this situation it is difficult to know what to do because of the lack of information on laws, services, and their rights as immigrants. It was common to hear "I don't know what to do in this situation," " I don't know what to do any more."

Lack of Integration of Community Services

Both service providers and some members of the Community Support Group mentioned that some immigrant families have difficulties accessing services in the community. According to their opinions the lack of integration of community services makes it more difficult for immigrant families to understand how the system works.

Some of the comments from both service providers were:

"There are services in the community, the problem is that there is no communication among agencies... there is no coordination of services...sometimes there are several agencies working with the same client but nobody knows what everybody is doing...it is like we do what our program is supposed to do but we do not think in the needs of the person as a whole."

"If people do not know about services...they can not access them..it is like we did not exist...I think it is our responsibility as agencies to change the way we work...instead of waiting for clients to come...we should go there,"

"There is a need for collaboration among agencies..I find that it is a

complete cut off between what the main agencies are doing and the needs of immigrant families.”

V

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The focus of the study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of Latin American youth regarding their migration processes and their involvement with the Canadian Justice System. Although an informal consultation with key informants from the Latin American community confirmed that youth involvement with the justice system was a social concern, I started the process open to what participants would share about their experiences and perceptions. I used the general research questions as a guide for the exploration of the issue.

As I attempted to define the parameters for the study, it became clear to me that I have to apply a diverse set of research approaches and methodologies. In general, I applied a naturalistic and a qualitative action oriented approach to the inquiry (Creswell, 1998; Easton, McComish & Greenberg, 2000; Hughes et al., 1993; Kingry-Westergaard & Kelly, 1990). The participants' accounts of their perceptions, experiences and feelings regarding the migration process were analyzed using the ecological approach for health and well-being (Dalton et al., 2001). The symbolic interactionist approach (Cuff & Payne, 1984) was employed to understand the participants' experiences with the Canadian Justice System, and the promotion-prevention-protection-continuum approach (Prilleltensky et al., 1999) was utilized to organize the participants' perceptions and suggestions on need for support and services.

The first step in understanding the experiences of the participants is to define the

situation in which their experiences took place. For participants in the study the situation involves issues related to the developmental stage of adolescence of the participants, the processes related to immigration, and processes related to the social construction of youth delinquency. Included in those considerations is also the issue of being immigrant, youth, and belonging to a particular ethnic group.

A. Immigrant Youth and Developmental Stages of Adolescence.

Cameron et al. (1999) describe adolescence as a distinct developmental stage that poses unique challenges for teens. They report that the transitions of adolescence can be a struggle for any youth even for those growing up in a nurturing family. According to the authors age-appropriate developmental patterns in this stage are self-assertion and independence, increased interactions with peers, and greater cognitive and verbal abilities that often place increased pressures on the parents-teen relationship. They argue that adolescence is a period in life in which youth are experimenting and testing their “new found power and independence” (p. 299).

Doueck (cited in Cameron et al., 1999) indicates that adolescents, in general, are perceived less generously than younger children. They are seen as more able to care for themselves, as more powerful, more threatening and even the architect of their own misfortunes, when in fact their needs for family affiliation and protection are still great.

It also has been reported that adolescents are much less likely to receive appropriate assistance if they are referred since “care options are limited for older teens, due to system abandonment of youth at age eighteen” (Wolfe, 1994, cited in Cameron et al., 1999, p. 292). According to Wolfe, there is also a “lack of focus on youth in the

current system: few programming options and few policies directed at youth protection” (p. 292).

As any other Canadian-born youth the transitions of adolescence are also a challenge for immigrant youth as well. Some of the participants were starting or going through this process of development when they migrated. They were struggling not just with the pressures of their developmental stage but also with the demands of their adaptation process, the lack of support services for immigrant youth, and the Canadian society’s perception on minorities that is not entirely welcoming (Mirchandani & Chan 2002).

B. Immigrant Youth and Their Adaptation Process

On the Migration Process

I set about to understand the experiences and perceptions of the participants related to the migration process by applying a holistic analysis. This analysis looks for evidence that “socioeconomic, cultural and contextual factors are a big influence in shaping the life of children and families”(Levine & Perkins, 1997, pp. 111-148). In particular, the study assessed the adaptation of immigrants as a complex multidimensional process (Porter, 1997) that shows diverse patterns within and across groups of immigrants (Rumbaut, 1997).

Participants perceived the migration process as a lengthy and stressful process that poses cultural, emotional, and psychological demands. Common findings were the lack of decision making power in the decision of coming to the country and pre-migration experiences as a result of political struggles in their countries of origin. Once in Canada

common challenges were learning the language, the cultural shock, entering the school setting immediately after coming to the country, intergenerational problems within the family, the lack of community cohesion among the Latin American community and the systemic racism and discrimination at all levels of Canadian society.

The study also found that participants were experiencing emotional challenges due to acculturation. The emotional challenges described by participants in their process of acclimatisation might be the result of youth not having any control or input in the decision of coming here which may increase the effect of what has been called “crisis of loss” and “crisis of load” (Cole, 1998). It was interesting to notice that children who came at a younger age reported fewer difficulties in adapting to the new environment. This corroborates one of Sands and Berry’s findings (1997) which is that changes due to acculturation may be attributed to a number of factors such as place of birth, age at migration, and length of time in the new culture.

In their process of acclimatization to the country, its customs, and people, participants perceived the process of acculturation as non negotiable, in which Canadian society expect them to develop, in short time, new sets of skills and new ways of thinking in areas related to personal values, attitudes, perception of self, friends, family and society. All of these findings corroborate what has been reported in other studies on immigrants (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Berry, 1983, 1988, 1992; Berry & Kim, 1988; Beiser et al., 1988, 1995; Kilbride, et al., 2000; Mirchandani & Chan, 2002). Cole (1998) mentions that these type of challenges may affect the well being of immigrants.

Social Relations and the Migration Process

The first step in understanding participants' behaviour is to review some of the social relationships and conditions in which they were living (Sasson, 1995). Hicks et al. (1993) argue that the shift in immigrants' social relationships occur in a social structural context that varies with the immigrant group and is influenced by education, income, availability of capital resources, racial attitudes, and social class. Other factors identified as important are age, gender, the immigrant's perception of her/his context, as well as family, peer, community and social relationships.

Family Relationships

At the family level, participants reported intergenerational tensions and conflicts, issues related to discipline, lengthy separation from family members, isolation and loneliness, poverty and lack of resources, and racism and discrimination as main challenges and concerns. They mentioned the need for the family "to accept them the way they are. To be supportive of their needs." The findings of the study show that participants in the study did not have the support provided by extended families, and in the case of the participant whose family came as refugee claimants, neither the experience of going together, as a family, through the migration experience.

In some ethnic groups, the nuclear family and the extended family (grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins) play important roles in each other's lives, becoming an important source for promoting well-being and preventing emotional disorder (Beiser et al., 1988, 1995). They provide emotional support, reinforce cultural norms, and offer constructive outlets for the dispersion of intra-familial tensions.

It has been reported that the process by which teens acculturate faster than their parents, a process called “dissonant acculturation” (Porter, 1997) leads to value discrepancies. Value discrepancies are a potential source of difficulties in the acculturation process. They may lead to intergenerational conflict, are expected to increase over time, and have been shown to be related to lower life satisfaction among adolescents in immigrant families (Phinney et al., 2000). Phinney et al. (2000) suggest that discrepancy in values between parents and adolescents are not necessarily related to the immigrant experience but they may reflect a situation in which parents seek to maintain the existing norms and expectations, whereas adolescents question the obligation expected of them. It seems that regardless of their cultural background, adolescents value family obligations less than do their parents.

Peer Relationships

It seems that peer relationships played an important role for participants, although for most of them, their relationships were limited to other immigrant teens who were facing the same struggle to conform and adapt to the main society. Participants mentioned that the only group that accepted them at school were other immigrants. Participants reported that being part of the group gave them feelings of belonging, of fitting in.

The literature mentions that positive peer relationships with pro-social peers or with one or more adults outside the home, commitment to school, academic achievements, participation in church, and other civic engagements are important protective factors and critical resources in teens’ struggles to forge new identities

(Kiesner et al., 2002; Lashbrook, 2000; Scaramella, Conger, Spoth, & Simmons, 2002).

Participants felt that being part of a group was very important, in particular for those that reported feelings of isolation and rejection at school by what they call "Canadian kids." Kiesner et al. (2002) provide some explanation for this phenomenon. They argue that "the importance of the group to the individual is considered in terms of group identification which refers to feelings of involvement and pride that an individual feels towards a group to which he or she belongs" (p. 205). They also mention that the "level of social success of the individual and being recognized as a group member by the other members may increase the individual's sense of identification" (p. 206). According to these authors, "socially rejected children are at high risk for a variety of negative developmental outcomes such as social disengagement from social groups in general" (Kiesner et al., 2002, p. 198).

Some participants recognized that being part of a group helped in their socialization process by breaking their social isolation. On the other hand, other participants perceived that it was their involvement with these groups or the pressure of someone from that group that put them in contact with the Canadian Justice System. These situations may be explained in terms of influence that the group exerts on its members. Kiesner et al. (2002) report that peer group influence may be the result of at least two processes, reinforcement and imitation, and that "it is the interaction between the identification and the characteristics of the group with which the individual identified that determines the type of effect that the group may have on the individual" (p. 205).

Scaramella et al. (2002) found that a lack of "nurturant and involved parenting

indirectly predict delinquency by increasing children's earlier antisocial behaviour and deviant peer relationship" (p. 189) since according to them "harsh, uninvolved parents not only fail to restrain their children's natural impulses toward deviance, but also fail to prohibit their children's access to unconventional peers" (p. 189).

It also appears that the experiences of racism, discrimination, and prejudice at the school and societal level limited participants' opportunities for engaging in peer relationships with other groups. It seems that for some of the participants, the school environment did not generate feelings of belonging. On the contrary, they felt that school was non welcoming for newcomer kids. In a study on individuals' perceptions and attitudes toward members of their own group and members outside the group, Nesdale and Flesser (2001) found that individuals derived their perception and attitudes from "their desire to identify with and belong to groups that are comparatively superior, as a means of enhancing their own self-esteem and improve their status within the group" (p. 514).

According to Nesdale and Flesser (2001) individuals perceived their own group members to be similar to themselves and show favoritism in their attitudes and behaviours toward them. Members outside the group are perceived to be different from members and to possess less favourable qualities, and they may be discriminated against. The authors mention that there is evidence that "children as young as 5 years of age in a mixed ethnic community have a developing awareness of which ethnic groups are better off and more highly regarded than others, and that they make comparisons between their standing as a member of one group versus other ethnic groups" (p. 513).

Kiesner et al. (2002) argue that a relation between deviant peer affiliation and problem behaviour has been found for violence and aggression, school dropout, and drug use (Kiesner, 2002). Although the study did not focus in this area, it will be interesting to further explore this issue as well as the effects of positive peer relationships on the well-being of immigrant youth.

Community Processes and Relationships

The study shows that immigrant youth in the study face some challenges related to the family and community environment. Participants perceived the Latin American community as fragmented and lacking organizational structures and representation. They reported poverty, lack of communication, and lack of access to services and cultural activities among others.

The literature on protective factors for immigrants reports that the support of relatives and friends, settlement and social agencies, ethno-cultural communities, and the access to recreational and cultural activities enable immigrants to release some of the anxiety of the migration process. It also has been reported that the ethno-cultural community replaces the familial and social networks lost with the process of migration, helping to provide newcomers with some of the practical assistance and psychological support that extended families supply in traditional cultures (Beiser et al., 1995; 1988). The fragmentation of the Latin American community, in this situation, acts as a risk factor that increases the potential for social isolation among newcomers from that specific ethnic group. The lack of community cohesion might help explain, in part, the lack of voice and representation of the Latin American community as perceived by participants in

this project (Speer, Jackson & Peterson, 2001).

Some studies report that an established ethnic group helps protect mental health, mainly by affirming cultural and personal identity. It has been found that living in the same neighbourhood, shopping at the same stores, sending their children to the same school, and attending the same churches impart a feeling of mutual support (Beiser et al., 1988). It also has been mentioned that getting so involved within their own communities may lead to isolation from the language, the institutions and the opportunities of the larger society (Aycañ & Berry, 1996; Beiser et al., 1995).

The focus of the study was not the community interaction or how supportive or cohesive the Latin American community is, however, based on the participants' suggestions "to celebrate things together as community" and "keep the culture and be proud of who we are" it may be important to explore the role of the Latin American community in supporting the migration process of its members.

Societal Relationships and Its Processes

Findings from the study show that poverty and lack of social support for immigrant families, especially for single-parent families, are some of the conditions in which immigrant youth were living. It seems that the family's challenges and stresses of the migration process diminished the possibilities of good interaction and family support for participants in the study.

At the societal level, unemployment, negative public attitudes and the lack of proficiency in English are considered also risk factors (Galabuzi, 2001; NCPCC, 1977b, 1977c). Some studies identify family income as one of the most powerful factors that

contributes to and shapes the settings in which adolescents live, since it is related to housing, neighbourhoods, schools, and social opportunities (Burman, 1996; Locke et al., 2001; NCPCC, 1996c). In addition, poverty has been associated with higher frequencies of other important risk factors for adolescents as well as with various adolescent problems that can follow or occur with maltreatment (Burman, 1996; Cameron et al., 1999, p. 302; NCPCC, 1997a). In relation to immigrant youth, Waters (1999) argues that they are at double risk because the migration process exacerbates risk conditions already present in the family .

Immigrants' Risk and Protective Factors

Some studies (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Berry, 1988; Berry & Kim, 1988; Beiser et al., 1995, 1988; NCPCC, 1995c, 1996a, 1997a, 1997b; Prilleltensky, 1993; Prilleltensky et al., 1999) have identified potential socio-economic risk factors for adolescent difficulties at home and in many other aspects of youth lives. Comparing the findings of the study with situations identified as risk factors for youth in general and immigrant youth in particular, it becomes clear that participants were suffering many risk factors at the individual, family, community and societal levels.

The combination of all these risk factors may have accounted for the personal and social conditions in which participants found themselves and also help understand the participants' involvement with the Canadian Justice System (Cameron, 2000; Canadian Center for Justice Statistics [CCJS], 1999; Lashbrook, 2000; Matherne & Thomas, 2001; NCPCC, 1995a, 1995c, 1996b, 1997a; Scaramella et al., 2002; Schissel, 1997; Yeager, 1996).

The alienation, frustration, and powerlessness experienced by participants in the study confirmed what has been reported in studies of immigrants and refugees (Phinney et al., 2000). Immigration as a process puts immigrant youth at a higher risk, and may affect their mental, physical and emotional well-being in a time where they are simultaneously dealing with the developmental transition to adulthood (Phinney et al., 2000).

C. Social Construction of Crime and Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System

Independently of how serious the problem of youth crime is perceived and reported in the literature (NCPCC, 1995a) for participants in the study and their families, youth involvement with the CJS was taken seriously because of the impact it has on the participants and their families. Immigrant youth as any other Canadians are subject to the social rules, customs, and laws that define specific acts a crime (Hester & Eglin, 1992), but also laws that govern access to resources, limit opportunities, protect rights, or restrict freedom (Levine & Perkins, 1997, p. 113).

One of the premises of symbolic interactionism approach (Cuff & Payne, 1984) is that “organization of social life arises from within society itself and out of the processes of interaction between members of society” (p. 137). The perspective also places “great emphasis on the importance of meaning and interpretation as essential human processes” (p. 137). Canadian society deals with issues of crime through institutions and processes that encompass processes of interaction between members of society.

Parliamentary institutions (federal, provincial, regional) approve laws that define which social interactions are considered crime. The law also defines the institutions that

will do the enforcement and interpretation when someone engages in activities legislated as crime. In all those situations, institutions and processes deal with the meaning and interpretation of essential human behaviors.

I use Hester and Eglin's work (1992, p. 11) to analyze the participants' experiences with the justice system. Participants engaged in certain forms of behaviours that society has given the meaning and the importance that qualified them as crime. The police through the process of enforcement ensured that participants' behaviours became recognized as crime. Through its processes the court interpreted and imposed certain kinds of sanctions or penalties. The processes of crime definition were completed and participants acquired the label that society gives people who engaged in behaviours prohibited by the law "Criminal identity is developed, maintained and transformed" (Hester & Eglin, 1992, p. 12).

The symbolic interactionist approach establishes that the working of society involves the interplay of heterogeneous groupings. The interplay among these groups is competitive and some groups make take advantageous positions within the groupings. Participants of the study reported (Appendix 13) discrimination and prejudice in their relationships at school, with police officers, when looking for jobs. They mention that both are present at all levels of Canadian society. The work of Mirchandani and Chan (2002), Galabuzi (2001), Jackson (2001), and Lock et al. (2001) confirm what participants in this study reported and help explain how in that interplay, ethnic communities are usually discriminated against and taken advantaged by groups in position of power within society.

Some reports (Mirchandani & Chan, 2002; Schissel, 1997) describe how the media play an important role in portraying youth victims of crime and violence as perpetrators instead of victims of abuse. This role has been described as "sensational and harmful, since it focuses on youth crime instead of on young people's achievement" (NCPC, 1997a, p. 9). The findings (Appendix 14) corroborate studies that mention that immigrants are stigmatized and used as scapegoats for many things (Galabuzi, 2001; (Mirchandani & Chan, 2002; Waters, 1999). When for any reason they get into trouble, it is common to blame them as persons instead of reviewing how society has failed them.

Symbolic interactionists argue that the impact of external factors in shaping the social life depends upon the kind of adaptation people make to them (Cuff & Payne, 1984, p. 137). In the study all of the participants (youth, parents, service-provider) identified structural factors as the main reasons for their involvement with the justice system (Appendix 5, 6, 7). The findings show that participants perceive their involvement with the system as unfortunate incidents that, in most cases, will have repercussions in their lives. Three of the participants were members of single-parent families that have difficulties coping economically and lack the resources to engage their children in recreational activities. One of the participants explicitly mentioned poverty as the main reason for his involvement with the Canadian Justice System.

Using the risk factors approach one can conclude that individual, community and societal and structural issues such as poverty, unemployment, social disorganization, social inequalities, and family breakdown have been associated with reducing the choices

available for youth in general, and with antisocial or delinquent behaviour (Brody et al., 2001; NCPCC, 1995a, 1997c).

In summary the results suggest that to understand the role immigration plays in adolescents' adaptation processes, one must consider different levels of analysis. Immigrant youth share with all youth the need to deal with their adolescent transition to adulthood. Immigration may complicate this process, when adolescents are exposed to a change of environment, values that differ substantially from those of their parents, lack of support systems at all levels, and a persistent racism and prejudice within Canadian society. Based on that information it is important to recognize that Canadian society in general is not providing enough support for immigrant families. Most of the time they are brought here and left alone without the social and economic support needed to develop their full potential.

Finally, it is important to mention that with the ongoing changes in the demographic structure of Canadian society, there is a continuing need for studies to examine the physical, emotional, and psychological processes that influence developmental outcomes among immigrant groups. Studies on immigrant youth in particular are needed to obtain information that can provide the basis for prevention and interventions at all levels.

VI

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Contributions to Literature

This study originated as a way to explore and address an issue that is a concern for some members of the Latin American community, despite the fact that youth crime has not increased significantly. Through the opinions, perceptions and experiences of participants, knowledge related to the migration process and the involvement of Latin American immigrant youth with the Canadian Justice System was constructed. Although most of the findings in the area of the migration process confirm what has already been reported in the literature, they nevertheless increase the body of evidence of the complexity of the interactions and the multiple factors that play a role in the migration process and how this process may impact immigrant youth' lives.

This study is particularly useful in relating the experiences of a group of Latin American immigrant youth involved with the Canadian Justice System. I consider the findings in this area a valuable and meaningful contribution to the literature around youth delinquency in ethnocultural communities. These contributions are more valuable since they reflect personal experiences, perceptions, and understandings of the Canadian Justice System. From that perspective, the study is a cultural description of what being young and immigrant in the Canadian context means, and especially, it provides the basis for understanding the experiences of Latin American immigrant youth in particular.

The symbolic interactionism approach helped me to understand the phenomenon

of immigrant youth involved with the Canadian Justice System from the actor's own perspective. I describe how participants in the study experienced the phenomenon, how they perceived and defined their circumstances. By describing how they look at their process of social relationships, I seek to show that immigrant youth involved with the Canadian Justice System are like any other "normal" youth that has been defined and labeled by the society at large as different.

In conclusion, I value the findings related to the participants' perceptions and experiences with the Canadian Justice System as worthwhile. In my view the participants' perceptions and experiences with the Canadian Justice System are a reflection of things that could happen to immigrant youth when the Canadian society fails to protect and provide them with the resources needed for their well-being.

B. Value of Participatory Action Research for this Project

In my attempt to understand the world view of Latin American immigrant youth who have been involved with the Canadian Justice System, I set about to identify, through their words, "what is important, legitimate and reasonable" for immigrant youth in order to understand what they perceive to be the nature of their reality (Taylor & Bodgan cited in Patton, 1990, p. 57; Sasson, 1995). The application of participatory action research strategies ensured that the study remained mindful of the context and that any "findings from the research will be used to build theory and guide further action" (Patton, 1990).

The use of this approach in this type of study helped me to be mindful of community assumptions around the issue, and allowed the participants to exert a certain degree of control in how the study took place. I also ensured that by using this approach,

Community Psychology's principles of individual wellness, enhancement of a sense of community, social justice, citizen participation, collaboration and community strengths, respect for human diversity, and empirical grounding (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997) were advanced.

The participatory action research strategy gave participants the opportunity to tell their story. I was able to obtain insider knowledge “that is deep, rich, and contextual” (Patton, 1990) of the phenomenon of immigrant youth involvement with the Canadian Justice System, advancing in this way the postulate that “knowledge is constructed through action” (Dalton et al., 2001).

The participatory action research approach was instrumental in involving stakeholders whose voices needed to be heard. I was mindful of the context when I involved them in the study through the organization of the Community Support Group. This group was instrumental in guiding and supporting the study, recognizing the community members' expertise, and as a “sounding board” in which I tested my understanding of the Latin American community. I shared control of the study with committee members when I used their feedback to improve the overall process of the study. The involvement of community members was a key component of the study. Their insights and knowledge of the issue contributed to the richness of the study, and will ensure that the process of community involvement in looking for solutions will continue even after I defend the thesis at the University.

As a participatory research process, the study demanded of me and the Community Support Group a long time commitment. It involved going back and forth,

checking with them at each step of the process, and listening to their suggestions. Now that it is done, I found that it was worthwhile to use this approach in this study. The participation of the community made it a lot easier to find people willing to talk openly on an issue that for most of them is a painful experience that they just want to forget.

C. Research Limitations

The use of small samples in qualitative studies helps facilitate the interviewing process, allows for a depth of analysis of responses, and facilitates the development of a relationship with those involved. Although the study benefitted from using a small sample for the reasons mentioned above, it is important to comment on the following limitations. The sample involved adolescents who were willing to be involved in the study. Participation required active consent on the part of participants and their parents. Out of twenty three potential candidates referred to the study that met the criteria, only nine chose to participate.

Opinions from the Community Support Group suggest that the non participation might have resulted from privacy concerns and distrust of the study. Such attitudes are likely to be linked to less contact with the larger society and lower levels of acculturation (Phinney et al., 2000). It might suggest that participants who chose to participate may have been more acculturated, felt more comfortable voicing their experiences than non participants. Even though with the limitation of a self-selected sample the findings are a valid reflection of the perceptions and understanding of those involved.

One second limitation is that, although measures to ensure that participants in the study represented the diversity of the Latin American community, it may not be the case.

Considering that limitation, the findings are applicable to this specific group, and cannot be generalized to the general Latin American community or other ethnic groups. The findings represent the perceptions and understandings of the participants, which I value as knowledge regarding their experiences as immigrant youth involved with the Canadian Justice System. It is also important to mention that in the study are also incorporated my biases and my own perceptions and knowledge of the Latin American community of which I am a member. Nevertheless, even including this assumption, the study provides a snapshot of the situation of immigrant youth in our community.

D. Future Research

As a Latin American immigrant woman concerned with issues that affect ethno-racial communities in the Canadian context, I see the need for participatory action research studies to better understand the diversity of issues affecting our communities. In this context, future research studies could include:

- A further exploration of the effect of migration processes in ethno-cultural communities.
- A further exploration of methodologies to engage youth in decision making processes.
- An exploration of ethno-racial perceptions of the legal system in the process of crime definition.
- An exploration of how the legal system responses help build a just society.
- An exploration of how the legal system deals with the needs of ethno-cultural communities.

- An exploration of community alternatives and citizen participation in crime prevention activities.

E. Personal Reflections

I will always be grateful for the continued support of the Community Support Group and the youth, parents, and service providers that participated in the study. Their willingness, insights and commitment made the implementation of this study a rewarding experience, for which I will never thank them enough.

The process followed in the study allowed me to apply Community Psychology's theory, principles and values. I learned a great deal about community perceptions and participation when searching for participants. I found that working with participants at different levels provided different perceptions on the same issue. It helped me to come to an understanding of the issue from a broad perspective. It was helpful in seeing that individual actions and life choices result from their interactions and relationships at different levels in accessing societal resources. I especially feel comfortable advancing the Community Psychology value of collaboration and building community strengths in my community. I engaged a group of people from the Latin America community with the purpose of creating a collaborative relationship in which both, the community and I, contributed our knowledge and resources in exploring an issue that was a cause of concern for some members of the Latin American community.

The application of participatory action research principles in this study was a learning experience on my part. Involving those affected by the issue in setting goals and making decisions around the study made me appreciate their life experiences, wisdom

and resources as valuable knowledge. It was a process of giving voice to those who are not normally heard, a process of empowerment and reflection that gave the community a new perspective on how to see and deal with this issue.

Appendix 1

Information Letter to Participants. English and Spanish Versions

English Version

Hello...

My name is Elba Martell and I am a graduate student in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University. I am looking for young people such as you to help me with a project as part of my degree requirements. The goal of the project is to obtain an understanding of the experiences, perceptions and opinions of Latin American immigrant youth with the Canadian Justice System. Also settling in a new country can be a stressful experience for those involved. Language, cultural barriers and the Canadian perception of immigrants are some of the issues faced by immigrants in their adaptation process. For immigrant youth the process might be unsettling, since they are dealing not just with the process of adaptation but also with developmental challenges due to their age. As an immigrant, as a parent and as a student of the Community Psychology program, I am interested in listening and understanding your perceptions in this areas as well.

I have taken steps to make the process of the study as collaboratively and participatory as possible. A Community Support Group organized with representatives from the Latin American community is supporting and providing guidance at each stage of the planning and implementation of the project. With their support and your participation, I hope to give voice and to acknowledge the experiences of those directly involved with the Canadian Justice System . and to offer families and the community the opportunity to reflect on the causes of this problem. I also hope to engage people interested in the well-being of our community in a planning process geared to prevent the involvement of youth in unlawful activities.

The study has the following phases. Phase I involved the organization of the Community Support Group. Phase II involves the o individual in-depth interviews of ten Latin American youth. The interview will last from one to one and a half hours. Before the interview takes place I will explain the procedures to follow during the interview, and issues of confidentiality and privacy. In Phase III you will be asked to participate in a two hours community forum. Your participation in this event will be as a community member and you will not have to do or say anything if you don't want to. The purpose of the forum is to present initial results from the study and to engage participants, families and community in a planning process for future actions. Feedback from the forum will be also incorporated into the thesis results.

It might be possible that reviewing the events and bringing back memories, feelings, and emotions developed as a result of your involvement with the Canadian Justice System may cause you some emotional discomfort. I am prepared to offer you a safe, non-threatening, and non-judgmental setting in which your privacy and confidentiality will be ensured. As a participant you have the right to refuse to answer any question, or address any topic with which you may feel uncomfortable. You can also stop the interview at any time. If following the interview you experience any emotional distress, please contact the above persons at their phone numbers, or call the Distress Centre at (519) 668 6508.

As a participant you are also entitled to discontinue your involvement in the study at any time. Your withdrawal from the study will have no impact on your present situation or in your involvement with the community in other aspects. If you choose to withdraw, any information that you provided will be destroyed immediately.

Your participation in the study is very important. As a person you will have the opportunity to tell your side of the story, to voice your concerns and propose ideas that can be beneficial to other youth in the community. I want to remind you that your ideas, thoughts and insights about this phenomenon will contribute extensively to the body of knowledge regarding immigrant youth involvement in criminal activities.

Please feel free to ask any questions at any time before, during or after the study. You may call me at Tel. (519) 742-8522 or call my thesis supervisor, Dr. Edward M. Bennett at (519) 884 0710 ext. 3527. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant please contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board of the Wilfrid Laurier University, Dr. Bruce Arai, at (519) 884 1970 extension 3753.

Thank you for taking the time to consider your involvement with the project. If you would like to participate, or have any questions, please feel free to call at the phone number listed below.

Sincerely,

Elba Martell, Principal Researcher
Community Psychology Program
Wilfrid Laurier University
Phone: (519) 742 8522

Information Letter to Participants. English and Spanish Versions

Spanish Version

Hola...

Mi nombre es Elba Martell, soy estudiante de la Maestria en Psicologia Comunitaria en la Universidad Wilfrid Laurier. Con esta carta estoy invitandolo(a) a participar en un proyecto de estudio relacionado con my tesis. El proposito del proyecto es obtener information que ayude a entender las experiencias de jovenes Latinoamericanos con el Sistema Canadiense de Justicia. Adaptarse a un nuevo pais puede ser una experiencia traumatizadora. El lenguaje, las barreras culturales y las ideas que los canadienses tienen de los inmigrantes son algunos de los obstaculos que los inmigrantes encuentran en el nuevo pais. Para los jovenes inmigrantes el proceso de adaptacion puede ser mas problematico: ellos no solo estan enfrentandose al proceso de adaptacion al pais sino que tambien estan enfrentandose a las exigencias de su desarrollo fisico, mental y emocional propio de su edad. Como inmigrante, como madre de familia, y estudiante de la Maestria in Psicologia Comunitaria yo estoy interesada en oír y entender sus experiencias en esas areas tambien.

Yo he dado algunos pasos para que este estudio sea colaborativo and participatorio. Yo he organizado un grupo de apoyo con representantes de la comunidad latina. El papel del group es proveer apoyo y guiar el desarrollo del estudio en las fases de planificacion y desarrollo del proyecto. Con el apoyo de ellos y su participation, yo espero darle voz y reconocer las experiencias de los involucrados con el Sistema Canadiense de Justicia. Tambien espero ofrecer a las familias y la comunidad latina la oportunidad de reflexionar sobre las causas de este problema.

Su participacion es muy importante. Usted tendra la oportunidad de hablar de sus experiencias como inmigrante. De cuales fueron en su opinion las causas que motivaron su involucramiento con el Sistema Judicial y si estas estan relacionadas con el proceso de adaptacion al pais. Usted podra expresar como fue tratado por el Sistema Judicial de Canada. Sus ideas y sentimientos en este campo contribuiran a obtener conocimientos que pueden ser utilizados no solo en la planificacion de actividades de prevencion, pero que tambien ayudaran a entender las necesidades, retos y dificultades con que se enfrentan los jovenes inmigrantes en Canada. El estudio pretende tambien proporcionarle a padres de familia y a la comunidad Latinoamericana la oportunidad de discutir y pensar que podemos hacer como comunidad ante este fenomeno.

El estudio tiene las siguientes fases. En la fase I yo organize el Grupo Comunitario de

Apoyo. En la fase II voy a entrevistar 10 jóvenes Latinoamericanos. La entrevista durara entre una hora y media a dos horas. Antes de la entrevista yo voy a explicar el proceso a seguir con la entrevista y las medidas para mantener la privacidad y la confidencialidad de los participantes. En la fase III yo voy a organizar un foro con la comunidad en general con el objeto de presentar los resultados del estudio y obtener ideas de como prevenir el involucramiento de jóvenes con el Sistema Judicial. El foro durara 2 horas y su involucramiento sera como miembro de la comunidad y no como persona que ha infringido la ley. Ideas y sugerencias provenientes del foro van a ser incorporadas en la tesis.

Puede ser que la revision, durante la entrevista, de las circunstancias que lo llevaron a infringir la ley le traiga memorias, ideas y sentimientos que lo dejen emocionalmente alterado(a). Si este es el caso, usted puede llamar a cualquiera de las personal responsables por el estudio o llamar al Distress Centre al telefono (519) 668 64508. Ademas le aseguro que he tomado las medidas necesarias para que su participacion en el estudio sea completamente segura y privada. Usted como participante tiene el derecho de parar la entrevista en cualquier momento, de rehusarse a contestar cualquier pregunta que lo haga sentirse incomodo, o discontinuar su participacion en el estudio. El no continuar en el estudio no le afectara su vida en ninguna forma. Si usted decide hacer esto, cualquier informacion que haya provisto le sera entregada de regreso o sera destruida.

Sientase con libertad de hacer preguntas ya sea antes, durante o despues del estudio. Usted puede llamarme directamente al tel. (519) 742- 8522 o llamar al supervisor de mi tesis, Dr. Edward M. Bennett al telefono (519) 884 0710 extension 3527. Si usted tiene preguntas en relacion a sus derechos como participante en el estudio, por favor contacte al Jefe del Comite de Eticas en Investigacion de la Universidad Wilfrid Laurier, Dr. Bruce Arai, al telefono (519) 884-1970 extension 3753.

Gracias por tomarse el tiempo para considerar su participacion. Si usted esta de acuerdo en participar o tiene alguna pregunta, por favor llameme al telefono listado abajo.

Atentamente,

Elba Martell, Investigador Principal
Maestria en Psicologia Comunitaria
Universidad Wilfrid Laurier
Phone: (519) 742 8522

Appendix 2

Open Ended Individual Interview Questionnaire

1. What can you tell me about your family?

Probes:

How many members, family composition?

How long has your family been in Canada?

How old were you when your family moved to Canada?

What does your family and you do for a living?

2. What has been your experience living here?

Probes:

What are you doing now?

How do you feel doing that?

How can you describe your relationships

Can you tell me what you like best about living here? Dislike ?

3. What are the issues faced by immigrant youth ?

Probes: As individual in relation to

Family: How do you see your family? What role does your family play in your life?

What would you change in the way your family do things?.

Friends: What can you tell me about your friends? How can you describe them?

What things do you like about them. Dislikes?

What role do they play in your life?

School: How do describe your involvement at school?

What do you like about school, dislike?

What role school play in your life?

Society: What is your opinion about the Canadian society in general?

How can you describe your involvement in the society in general?

What do you like about Canadian society?

What do you dislike?

4 . Can you tell me about the problem that put you in contact with the Canadian Justice System?

Probes:

What was the nature of your experience with the Canadian Justice System?

What happens?

What were your feelings, thoughts, emotions?

What were the reactions of family, friends, school, others?

Why do you think they react in this way?

How do you perceive yourself at this time?

What impact this experience has had in your life?

Regarding the situation, what would you do different?

How in your opinion the immigration process influences the involvement of immigrant youth with the Canadian Justice System?

5. What can you tell me about the Canadian Justice System?

Probes:

What did you know about the criminal justice system?

What was your sentence? How do you feel about it? Was it fair, unfair?

How have you been treated by: Police, court personnel, lawyers, others?

What/Who helped you to deal with the legal issues around the case?

6. How can you describe the support that you have received?

Probes:

Who has supported you? What type of support?

How helpful has this support been for you?

What support is missing?

What are your suggestions to make the system more helpful for immigrant youth?

How could family, friends, school, others be more supportive of you in this situation?

7. How would you describe your rehabilitation process?

Probes:

What have you done to avoid further involvement with the Canadian Justice System?

What type of support is available in the community for immigrant youth who has had conflict with the law?

Have the services available been helpful in avoiding further involvement in more serious legal problems?

8. What can be done to prevent immigrant youth involvement with the Justice System?

Probes:

As individual ? Families? School? Society?

Who should be responsible for those activities ?

How should prevention activities for immigrant youth be organized and delivered?

How would you like to be involved in preventive activities?

9. What is missing for people like yourself in the community?

10. What would you like to see available for immigrants youth in general?

11. What else would you like to talk about?

Appendix 3
Informed Consent Statement. English and Spanish Versions.

English Version

You are invited to participate in “Voices from Immigrant Youth: Perceptions of their experiences with the Canadian Justice System. A qualitative study.” The purpose of this study is to obtain an understanding of the experiences and perceptions of Latin American immigrant youth in their contact with the Canadian Justice System.

The study will be developed in three phases: Phase I will be the preparation of a literature review, collection of background information related to the study, and organization of a community support group. Phase II aims to collect information from 10 Latin American immigrant youth through the administration of an in-depth individual interview. Phase III will be the organization of a community forum with the purpose of presenting initial findings of the study to the community. Feedback from the forum will be incorporated into the final report. As participant in the study you will take part in one individual interview and attend the community forum. The interview will last from one and half to two hours. The community forum will last two hours and you do not have to say or do anything if you do not want to, but your participation as a community member is very important for the overall study.

Your participation in the study requires that you talk and remember your experiences, emotions, and thoughts of a very particular time in your life. Recollecting it might create you emotional distress, bring back feeling of distrust, discomfort, and feeling of being exposed and vulnerable. Your participation is voluntary and confidential. You have the freedom to stop the interview or withdraw your name from the study at any time. If you feel distressed after the interview you can call me at any time at (519) 745 8522 or call the Distress Centre at (519) 668 6508.

A breach of confidentiality can be one of the risks of participating in the study. However, to protect your privacy and confidentiality you are provided with a code that is known only to you and myself. The list containing the participant's code will be kept separately from other records in a locked filing cabinet. I will remove from the records and the written report your name or any sign that may identify you. Any information you provide is confidential and I will not share it with anyone from outside.

As participant in the study, you have the opportunity to tell others what in your opinion are the reasons of the involvement of Latin American immigrant youth with the Canadian Justice System. It is a

unique opportunity to tell your side of the story, to speak out for yourself, and also to become involved in community initiatives to increase the well-being of immigrant youth.

Written records, tapes recorded, transcriptions and any other material containing information from participants will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, for what I am the only person responsible. Your name will not appear in the study and I will not voluntarily release any information that you consider confidential. However, you need to be aware, that I might be called by a court order to release information of your activities, if you are in the process of being judged in a criminal court. I will not be responsible for any breach of confidentiality due to disclosure on your part, so please, keep your participation in the study confidential.

I ask your consent to tape record the interview, to take notes during the interview and to include any quotation in the report that might increase the validity of the study. If this is the case, you will be contacted either by phone, mail or will can meet to review it. Your personal record will be destroyed once the thesis is defended, but I ask your consent to keep the raw data for future studies. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer some questions or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled in the community. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

If you have questions at any time about the study, the procedures or you are experiencing adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, you may contact me at (519) 742 8522 or my thesis advisor Dr. Edward Bennett at (519) 884 0710 ext. 3527. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Bruce Arai, Chair of the University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, at 884-1970 ext. 3753.

CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date: _____

Youth Consent Agreement to Participate in the Interview

- I understand that I am being asked to participate in an interview to find out what have been my experiences with the Canadian Justice System.
- I understand that I will be asked to answer questions about my experience with the Canadian Justice System.
- I understand that I don't have to answer questions if I don't want to.
- I understand that the information will be used for Elba's Master's thesis. Elba's thesis advisor is Ed Bennett. He is at Wilfrid Laurier University. Tel 884 1970 ext. 3527.
- I understand that Elba won't use my name in anything she writes or tells people about the study.
- I understand that Elba can be ordered by a court order to provide information of my activities, if I am in the process of being judged in a criminal court.
- I understand that the interview will be tape-recorded and that the tape will not be shared with anyone except Elba.
- I understand that after Elba's defends her thesis, she will destroy my personal record but will keep the raw data from this interview for potential future studies.
- I understand that I can call the Distress Centre if as a result of this interview I feel distressed.
- I understand that I can call Elba's thesis advisor, or Dr. Bruce Arai, if I have anything else I want to say or if I have any questions.
- I grant my consent for Elba to use quotes from my interview, providing she does not use my name or anything that can identified me.

YOUTH CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Subject's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Parent Agreement for her/his Child to Participate in the Interview

- I understand that I am being asked my consent for my daughter/son to participate in an interview to find out what have been her/his experiences with the Canadian Justice System.
- I understand that my daughter/son will be asked to answer questions about her/his experiences with the Canadian Justice System.
- I understand that my daughter/son doesn't have to answer questions if she/he doesn't want to.
- I understand that the information provided by my daughter/son will be used for Elba's Master's thesis. Elba's thesis advisor is Dr. Edward Bennett. He can be contacted at Wilfrid Laurier University at tel. (519) 884 1970 ext. 3527.
- I understand that Elba won't use my daughter/son's name in anything she writes or tells people about the study.
- I understand that Elba can be summoned by a court order to provide information of my daughter/son activities, if she/he is in the process of being judged in a criminal court.
- I understand that the interview will be tape-recorded and that the tape will not be shared with anyone except Elba.
- I understand that after Elba defends her thesis, she will destroy my daughter/son personal record but will keep the raw data from her/his interview for potential future studies.
- I understand that my daughter/son can call the Distress Centre (668 6508) if as a result of the interview she/he feels distressed.
- I understand that my daughter/son can call Elba's thesis advisor, or Dr. Bruce Arai if she/he has anything else she/he wants to say or if she/he has any additional questions.
- I understand that Elba will request of my daughter/son to grant her/his consent for Elba to use quotes from her/his interview, providing Elba does not use my daughter/son's name or anything that can identified her/him.

PARENT CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree for my daughter/son to participate in this study.

Participant's name _____ Date _____
 Parent's signature _____ Date _____
 Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Informed Consent Statement. English and Spanish Versions

Spanish Version

Usted esta invitado a participar en "Voces de jovenes inmigrantes: Ideas acerca de sus experiencias con el Sistema Judicial de Canada. Un estudio cualitativo". El proposito de este estudio es llegar a un entendimiento de las experiencias de jovenes Latinoamericanos en su contacto con el Sistema Judicial de Canada.

La entrevista dura de una y media a dos horas. El foro esta programado para durar dos horas y usted asistira como miembro de la comunidad y no como persona que ha tenido problemas con la ley. Algunos de los riesgos de participar en el estudio pueden ser: Su participacion en el estudio requiere que usted hable y recuerde su experiencia, emociones y pensamientos que su involucramiento con el Sistema Judicial le produjo. Recordar esta experiencia probablemente le traera sentimientos de desconfianza e incomodidad o lo hara sentirse vulnerable y expuesto, creandole problemas emocionales. Si usted se siente de esta forma durante la entrevista, usted tiene la libertad de no contestar preguntas que lo hacen sentirse mal, parar la entrevista o no continuar en el estudio. Si despues de la entrevista usted aun se siente emocionalmente mal, usted puede llamarme al tel 883 2004 extension 5350 durante horas de trabajo o al tel 742 8522 despues de horas de trabajo, o llamar directamente al Distress Centre (tel.668 8508).

Otro de los riesgos puede ser que se rompa la confidencialidad. Para prevenir que esto pase, usted sera asignado un codigo que sera conocido solo por usted y yo. La lista conteniendo los codigos sera mantenida separada de otros materiales del estudio y sera guardada bajo llave. Su nombre, senas y cualquier informacion que pueda identificarlo sera removido de records o de la tesis. Cualquier informacion que usted provea sera tratada en forma confidencial y yo no la compartire con nadie mas.

Todo material escrito, cassettes con las entrevistas, y cualquier otro record que se use durante el estudio que contenga informacion acerca de los participantes se guardara bajo llave y yo sere la unica persona que tendra acceso a la informacion. Su nombre y cualquier otra signo que lo pueda identificar no aparecera en la tesis. Toda la informacion que usted provea es confidencial. Sin embargo, usted necesita saber que en el unico caso que la confidencialidad se pueda quebrar sera si yo soy llamada, por una orden judicial, a dar informacion que usted me haya proporcionado y que este relacionada con sus actividades, si usted esta en proceso de ser juzgado en la corte. Yo le pedire que cualquier informacion relacionada con el estudio la mantenga confidencial. Yo no sere responsable de informacion que usted proporcione en relacion con el estudio y que puede afectar la confidencialidad del estudio y su privacidad.

Pido su autorizacion para grabar la entrevista, para tomar notas durante la misma y para incluir cualquier opinion suya, que yo sienta que es importante, en el estudio. Si este es el caso, yo lo llamare por telefono, o le mando por correo la parte de sus opiniones que aparecera en la tesis, o nos reunimos para que usted la revise, cambie o le agregue. Una vez que yo defienda mi tesis, su record personal sera destruido, pero pido su consentimiento para mantener la informacion que usted proporcione y que puede ser utilizada mas adelante como complemento de otros estudios.

Su participacion en este estudio es voluntaria. Esto significa que usted puede retirarse del estudio cuando usted lo decida sin que esto le cause problemas personales. Durante la entrevista usted puede pararla en el momento que usted quiera o no contestar alguna pregunta si usted lo considera conveniente. Si usted se retira del estudio, cualquier informacion que usted haya dado se le devolvera o sera destruida.

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta acerca del estudio o del procedimiento a seguir, llameme al telefono (519) 742 8522 o llame a mi asesor the tesis Dr. Edward Bennett at telefono (519) 884 1970 extension 3527. Si despues de la entrevista usted se siente emocionalmente afectado, llameme o contacte directamente el Distress Centre al tel. 668 6508.

Este proyecto ha sido revisado y aprobado por el Comite de Eticas en Investigacion de la Universidad. Si usted siente que no ha sido tratado de acuerdo a los lineamientos planteados en esta forma, o si siente que sus derechos como participante han sido violados durante el curso de esta investigacion, usted puede contactar al Dr. Bruce Arai, Jefe del Comite de Eticas en Investigaciones de la Universidad Wilfrid Laurier, telefono 884-1970 ext 3753.

CONSENTIMIENTO

Yo he leído y entiendo la informacion anterior. Yo he recibido una copia de esta forma. Yo estoy de acuerdo en participar en el estudio

Firma del participante _____ Fecha _____

Firma del investigador _____ Fecha _____

Consentimiento del joven para participar en la entrevista

- Yo entiendo que he sido invitado a participar en una entrevista acerca de mis experiencias con el Sistema Judicial Canadiense.
- Yo entiendo que yo me haran preguntas relacionadas con mi experiencia con el Sistema de Justicia Canadiense
- Yo entiendo que yo puedo dejar de contestar algunas preguntas si yo lo creo conveniente.
- Yo entiendo que la informacion sera usada para la tesis de Elba. El asesor de tesis es el Dr. Edward Bennett. El trabaja en la Universidad Wilfrid Laurier y su telefono es (519) 884 1970 extension 3527.
- Yo entiendo que Elba no usara mi nombre en ningun material que ella escriba o que comente con la gente en relacion con este estudio.
- Yo entiendo que Elba puede ser ordenada por una orden del juez a proveer informacion de mis actividades, si yo estoy en proceso de ser juzgado en la corte.
- Yo entiendo que la entrevista sera grabada y que el cassette sera oido solo por Elba.
- Yo entiendo que despues de defender su tesis. Elba destruira el record con mis datos personales, pero mantendra la informacion dada en la entrevista para futuros estudios.
- Yo entiendo que yo puedo llamar al Distress Centre (tel. 519 668 6508) si como resultado de la entrevista yo me siento emocionalmente afectado.
- Yo entiendo que yo puedo llamar a Elba si yo tengo algo mas que aportar despues de la entrevista, a su asesor Dr. Bennett o al Dr. Bruce Arai. si yo tengo alguna pregunta extra.
- Yo doy me permiso para que Elba use mis opiniones de esta entrevista en su tesis, con el entendido de que mi nombre ni nada que me identifique aparecera en la tesis.

CONSENTIMIENTO DEL JOVEN

Yo he leído y entiendo la información anterior. Yo he recibido una copia de esta forma. Yo estoy de acuerdo en participar en la entrevista.

Firma del Joven _____ Fecha _____

Firma del Investigador _____ Fecha _____

Consentimiento del Padre de Familia para que su Hija(a) Participe en el Estudio

- Yo entiendo que se me esta pidiendo mi consentimiento para que mi hija(o)participe en el estudio cuyo objetivo es investigar cuales han sido su experiencia con el Systema Judicial Canadiense.
- Yo entiendo que las preguntas que se le haran a mi hija(o) seran acerca de sus experiencia con el Sistema Judicial Canadiense.
- Yo entiendo que mi hija(o) no tiene que contestar algunas preguntas si ella (el) no quiere hacerlo.
- Yo entiendo que la informacion provista por mi hija(o)sera usada para la tesis de la maestria de Elba. El asesor de la tesis es el Dr. Ed Bennett. El trabaja en la Universidad Wilfrid Laurier. Su telefono es 884 1970 ext. 3527
- Yo entiendo que Elba no usara el nombre de mi hija(o) en ningun documento escrito
- Yo entiendo que Elba puede ser llamada, por una orden del juez, a proporcionar informacion acerca de las actividades de mi hija(o), si ella(el) esta en proceso de ser juzgada en la corte.
- Yo entiendo que la entrevista sera grabada y que el cassette sera oido solo por Elba
- Yo entiendo que despues que Elba defienda su tesis, ella destruira el record conteniendo los datos datos personales de mi hija(o), pero ella ha pedido el consentimiento de mi hija(o) para mantener la informacion dada en la entrevista para futuros estudios.
- Yo entiendo que mi hija(o) puede llamar al Distress Centre (668 6508) si como resultado de la entrevista ella(el) se siente emocionalmente afectada(o).
- Yo entiendo que mi hija(o) puedo llamar a Elba si ella(el) tiene algo mas que aportar despues de la entrevista ; al asesor Dr. Bennett o al Dr. Bruce Arai, si mi hija(o) tiene alguna pregunta extra.
- Yo entiendo que Elba ha pedido el consentimiento de mi hija(o) para poder usar las opiniones que el dio en la entrevista, con el entendido de que el nombre de mi hijo(a) ni nada que lo identifique va a aparecer en la tesis.

CONSENTIMIENTO DEL PADRE DEL JOVEN

Yo he leído y entiendo la información anterior. Yo he recibido una copia de esta forma. Yo estoy de acuerdo en que mi hija(o) participe en el estudio.

Firma del Joven _____ Fecha _____

Firma del Padre _____ Fecha _____

Firma del Investigador _____ Fecha _____

Appendix 4
Immigrant Youth's Experiences, Perceptions and Feelings Regarding the Migration Process

Level of Analysis: Self/ Individual

Experiences, Perceptions and Feelings	Issues
<p>Transition Period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncomfortable • Miss friends back home • I like more there • Feel lonely • You have to learn everything at once and fast • Canadians expect immigrants to be like them as soon as we get here...but we don't get enough support • Not accepted...not spoken to.. • Felt everything was new... • Felt like "it was a bomb" the shock..the food..culture..language..even the weather.. 	<p>Crisis of loss</p> <p>Social expectations</p> <p>Discrimination</p> <p>Cultural shock</p>

Level of Analysis: Immediate Family

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everybody was busy trying to adapt..you are on your own. • My parents were busy too..learn English..get a job. • Parents want to keep things the way they were back home. • I want to go out as other kids do. • Parents see Canadian society as a threat. • Felt not worthy..I was a stranger at home. • I live just with my mom and my brothers..my parents are separated. • My family is all mixed up..we fight ..like all brothers do. • My mom does not have money..we are on welfare. 	<p>Demands on family due to migration</p> <p>Value discrepancies</p> <p>Feeling of neglect</p> <p>Single-parent family</p> <p>Sibling rivalry</p> <p>Poverty</p>
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Immigrant Youth's Experiences, Perceptions and Feelings Regarding the Migration Process
Continuation

Level of Analysis: Social Network, Extended Family, Friends

Experiences, Perceptions and Feelings	Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I did not see my family for five years.. It is like you are a stranger..like a new friends...you start to open up little by little. • My family was happy to come here.. 	<p>Family separation due to immigration laws re: family reunification.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They spoke Spanish like me..some of them help me with my homework and explaining what the teacher was saying.. we hang out together... play soccer together... or went out 	<p>Friends as source of support. Identity Belonging</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My friends are like my family.. .. I don't know what I will do without them" • I trust them.. I do thing with them .. I told them things I don't tell my parents. 	<p>Loyalty</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Went to drink after each game. • We wanted to have fun and not to study • Most of them were with problem with the police also 	<p>Fitting in Negative peer relationships</p>

Continuation Appendix 4 : Community Organizations

Experiences, Perceptions and Feelings	Issues
<p>I was seen as an stranger.. as different..I was shunned ... " smell".. I felt isolated</p> <p>I felt ignored.. "I was a ghost" "like it was a wall between them and myself"</p> <p>I felt scared ... frustrated.. I didn't understand what was going on..I felt like an idiot. Kids made fun of us ..called us dumbI was perceived like a bad kid.</p> <p>School is hard..difficult if you don't understand what is going on around you.</p> <p>School is not welcoming for immigrant kids</p> <p>Teachers for regular classes doesn't have enough time to help you.. They asked if you have any question...but you don't understand well...so you don't said anything. ESL teachers were the best Discrimination.. some teachers didn't ask you.. they ignore you.</p> <p>I don't really talk to the teacher that much... I just don't get involved in school activities... it is not me.</p> <p>I dislike regular classes.. I felt bored at school.. School don't provide incentive for students.. teachers don't motivate us..other kids don't like it [school] either..</p> <p>I felt so much better in this school... students are friendly..teachers are good... there immigrants are the majority... I get alone with everybody..</p> <p>like school to some extent...it pushes yourself to get better grades</p> <p>After I learn English.. I felt very good at school.. the student were very friendly.. the teachers were good... I like it a lot</p> <p>Immigrant stick together at school.. Portuguese with Portuguese...oriental with oriental... The only group that was open to me were immigrants.. So I stick with them.. .They were the only ones that accepted me... the other kids it was like I was a ghost.."</p> <p>I felt alone.. being with them you are part of the group.. we stick together..we defend ourselves</p> <p>Canadian kids are cool... but not friendly. They do not accept you easily. I have the feeling they saw me as strange.. different</p>	<p>Prejudice</p> <p>Discrimination</p> <p>Language</p> <p>School culture</p> <p>Discrimination</p> <p>School culture</p> <p>School Environment</p> <p>Welcoming</p> <p>Isolation</p> <p>School culture</p>

Appendix 5

**Causes of Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System, as
Perceived by Participants**

Level	Causes
Individual	<p>Anger management: I have drinking and anger management problems...I got into a fight with someone at school...then I broke probation</p> <p>Lack of self-esteem : I was afraid to say no. I just did what he asked me do.</p> <p>Isolation: Being an immigrant had an influence because I felt alone ..isolated. I wanted to be like them..</p>
Family	<p>Family relationships I was really angry at that time.... I had unresolved family problems.</p>
Community	<p>Peer relationships I have good and bad friends... the good ones help me to learn English and help me with homework... with the others we play soccer and every time... after the game we drank a lot...if we won .. we drank ..if not we drank.</p> <p>I was set up by friends.</p> <p>Involvement with specific groups I felt alone at school ... I started hanging out with them.. they said we have to defend ourselves .. to protect ourselves..</p> <p>Isolation/need to belong I was part of this group.. they were the only one that invited me to be part of the group... we hang out together ..the we got in trouble.</p> <p>Lack of integration of Latin American community: we discriminate even among ourselves</p>
Societal	<p>Poverty We are in welfare..my mom doesn't have enough money.</p>

Appendix 6

Causes of Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System, as Perceived by Parents

Level	Causes
Individual	<p>Lack of parenting skills: I don't know what to do any more with my children..they don't listen.</p> <p>Doubts about their skills as parents: I am a failure</p>
Family	<p>Family breakdown: Separation or divorce affect children...lack of discipline.</p> <p>Single-parent family : Being single mom creates conflict between my need to go to work and the need to be with my children. When I come back from work, I don't have any energy left.</p> <p>Life's exigencies: stress at work , coming home ..children misbehaved</p> <p>Cultural differences: We want to educate our children as we were educated but you can't do that here.</p> <p>Value shift: Our values as parents are different as the ones the children see outside.</p> <p>Lack of communication</p>
Community	<p>Lack of Communication between School and Parents: They call you just when there is a problem. They leave messages in the answering machine but the same child can erase the message when he gets home. It is useless.</p> <p>Peer pressure</p> <p>Racism: Children at school make fun of immigrant children, some teacher don't say anything</p>
Societal	<p>Understanding of the system: once the child is 16 [years old] we can't say anything to them...they call 911 or they say they go live by themselves collecting welfare..I don't agree with... lack of discipline</p> <p>Poverty: no money for recreational activities, just to buy the bare necessities</p> <p>Social assistance: stigma, own feelings of being unable. as a parent, to provide for the needs of the family.</p> <p>Discrimination : It is difficult for young people to get jobs.</p>

Appendix 7

Causes of Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System, as Perceived by Service Providers

Level	Causes
Individual	
Family	<p>Parent expectations: Some parents do not see education as important and start pressuring kids to start working more so when the family live in poverty.</p> <p>Parents' lack of communication skills: Some parents do not know how to talk to their children, they do not know what's going on at school.</p> <p>Parents' language barriers: If parents do not speak English well...they do not talk to their kid's friends.. they do not know what type of friends they are.</p> <p>Intergenerational conflicts: There is conflict among the family ..parents are very authoritarian..they want children to behave as they did when they were young but they do not realize that children live in another society.</p>
Community	<p>Lack of community support: Our people do not help..we can see families in need but we don't help..It seems that once we are here we forgot how we were in our countries.. here everybody lives by himself.</p>
Societal	<p>Lack of support: I blame the society..we bring them to the country and we do not provide any support for them.</p> <p>Racism and discrimination: We do not like to talk about racism and discrimination but for me immigrants are discriminated in many ways...difficulties finding jobs. less and less funding for programs that work with immigrants...fewer English classes.</p> <p>Poverty: Poverty creates many problems..parents do not have enough money to provide for the family.. I know one person..he was stealing as a way to help his family.</p> <p>Indifference to the needs of immigrants: As a society we are indifferent to the needs of this populations. We bring them here. then we forgot about them.</p> <p>Canadian Justice System: I work with youth in problems and for me the system makes them to continue more and more involved. Some sentences are useless..they do not go to the root of the problem..it is a societal problem</p>

Appendix 8

Consequences of Involvement with the Canadian Justice System

Impact	Feelings
<p>I don't know what impact it will have in my life...</p> <p>It has affected my life.. now I have a criminal record... it is difficult to get jobs or go to college.. people see it [criminal record] and it is a barrier...</p> <p>My friend was telling me that his dad use me as an example...[bad] ..he told his son...you will become as.... that has been in prison... many times... I don't even know that person...</p> <p>I see this incident in my life...like something stupid that happens to me when I was fifteen... I have learned from it.</p> <p>My record will be clean when I am 18... until then If I go for a job ..they might check and I may have problems..</p> <p>It will not affect me because the file will be erased when I am 18</p> <p>I have learned my lesson... it is not a good experience to be there [at court]</p> <p>once you are there... it is easier to go more in depth... that's happens to me ... I have broken probation..</p> <p>It was a stupid thing I did ...It wont have any repercussions on my life because it was a minor offense. When I am 18 years old the record will be destroyed.. but I have problems now if I want to apply for jobs ... it will be showed there.</p> <p>It has affected my life ..now I have a criminal record.. it will be difficult to get jobs or go to college..</p>	<p>I felt scared... I started crying because I didn't know what will happen to me</p> <p>I felt intimidated being there... I couldn't believe I was there like a big criminal...for something stupid...</p> <p>I learned my lesson.</p> <p>I felt angry at court because I was the only one being punished when the other guy started the fight...I just defended myself . It has repercussions in my life...</p>

Appendix 9

Participants' Reactions to their Involvement with the Canadian Justice System

Participants' Reactions	Feelings	Issue
<p>It was a stupid thing I did</p> <p>We were afraid... crying.. I was very nervous...</p> <p>I was afraid ... I didn't know what will happen.. I didn't know what to do</p> <p>It is intimidating to be there [in court].. I couldn't believe I was there...It made me feel bad... I felt more for my parents ... they were disappointed and embarrassed to be there...</p> <p>I was angry to be there because I was defending my friend...and I was the one being punished when the other [person] initiated the fight... I just reacted...</p> <p>I felt afraid....scared..lonely .. I was like being in a cage [the prison] .. I said to myself I am not coming back here.</p> <p>I felt odd.... I did nothing wrong... she got what she deserved.. I don't regret it...</p> <p>I saw a friend at the store ..he told me to get a CD for him...then he ran away... they charged me because I was at the store...they wouldn't let me explain my side of the story</p> <p>I felt really mad... I didn't know the gay intentions...</p> <p>I got into a fight with someone at school, then I broke probation. If they give you probation, they are just given you more rope to hang yourself.</p>	<p>Fear of the unknown</p> <p>Fear of the effect</p> <p>Awe</p> <p>Shame</p> <p>Angry</p> <p>Despair</p> <p>Acceptance</p> <p>Disgust</p> <p>Anger</p> <p>Powerlessness</p>	<p>Participants' feelings to the experience range from : Fear of the unknown to awe, anger, acceptance.</p> <p>hopelessness and powerlessness.</p> <p>Lack of knowledge of how the system works.</p> <p>The culture of the Canadian Justice System conveys a message of intimidation.</p> <p>Perception of correctional services</p> <p>Perception of alternative measure as useless, that get youth more in trouble.</p> <p>Describe participants' own present circumstances</p>

Appendix 10

Families' Reactions to Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System as Perceived by Participants

Families' Reactions	Feelings	Issue
<p>My mom was angry....and disappointed.</p> <p>My parents were disappointed and ashamed.</p> <p>My parents were very upset ...they told me it was my fault... it made me angry.</p> <p>My brothers didn't care.</p> <p>My brothers told me I was stupid.</p> <p>My family were sad and worried.</p> <p>I don't live with my family... I don't see them ...I don't think about them...they kick me out of the house.</p> <p>My family has been very supportive... they were angry at first... but they have been with me ...not like other parents that I know that once the children are in problems....they kick them out or tell them it is your problem..</p> <p>My father doesn't speak to me.. just my mom.</p>	<p>Disappointment</p> <p>Blame</p> <p>Indifference</p> <p>Anger</p> <p>Support</p> <p>Abandonment</p>	<p>Families react in different ways from brothers who do not care to parents who feel sad, worried and disappointed.</p> <p>How the family reacts to youth involvement with the justice system could influence the support that the youth will receive from family members.</p> <p>Families' reactions show that the issue of youth involvement with the justice system affects the social interactions of family members.</p> <p>Describe families' own present circumstances regarding their children's involvement with the justice system.</p>

Appendix 11

**Friends' Reactions to Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian Justice System as
Perceived by Participants**

Friends' Reactions	Feelings	Issue
<p>Well... my friends have been also in court...so they didn't said anything to me..</p> <p>They asked me ... are you the only one being charged? When I said yes...they said it was not fair because I was just defending my friend..</p> <p>I lost my friends's trust for awhile....I felt they won't trust me with something valuable in their homes...</p> <p>I didn't see them after that... I am not in touch with them... I changed school... I have new friends...</p> <p>I try not to hang out with them because I know that if I go out with them ... I will get again in trouble ... I don't want that...</p> <p>Some of my family's friend were disappointed.</p>	<p>Acceptance</p> <p>Support</p> <p>Self-reproach</p> <p>Identify peer relationships as negative</p>	<p>Describe how the issue of participants' involvement with the justice system is perceived by their social networks: support, acceptance, rejection.</p> <p>Provides information of how social relationships are modified by the issue of participants' involvement with the system. It seems that once they have gone to court people perceived them as different.</p>

Appendix 12

**Community Members' Reactions to Immigrant Youth Involvement with the Canadian
Justice System as Perceived by Participants**

Community Members' Reactions	Feelings	Issue
<p>Being immigrant..like people kind of expect us to get in trouble..</p> <p>People at school avoided me...like I was a big criminal</p> <p>People automatically blame us.. immigrants.. instead of white people because they think Canadian wouldn't do that ... is [sic] other cultures.</p> <p>The police has stopped me many times..once one of them followed me until I got home.</p> <p>Being an immigrant....I would said so... as a white person. I would be less suspicious.</p> <p>They probably will heard me... but as a person of colour they just assumed the worst.. didn't hear me.</p> <p>I think it is not only immigrant youth involved ..other youth are involved too</p>	<p>Prejudice</p> <p>Society's perceptions</p> <p>Suspiciousness</p> <p>Discrimination</p>	<p>Prejudice</p> <p>Society perceptions of immigrants as troublemakers.</p> <p>Describe society as suspicious of people of colour.</p> <p>Racism and Discrimination</p> <p>Stereotype of immigrant youth</p> <p>Issue of over-policing stigmatized groups is reinforced here.</p>

Appendix 13

Immigrant Youth's Perceptions of the Canadian Justice System

Component	Perceptions, feelings, opinions	Theme
Offense	Shoplifting, assault, possession of a weapon, drinking and driving under age, vandalism , and robbery.	Forms of behaviours prohibited by criminal law. Speak about the process of crime definition through legislation (Hester & Eglin, 1992, p. 11)
Police	<p>I do not like the police. but they were very professional...they made me think that what I did was not a joke.. it was an offense.</p> <p>I felt that the police officers are racists</p> <p>I don't trust cops..I don't like cops.. they expect that immigrants..especially Black and Spanish [sic] to be criminals.</p> <p>I felt harassed by the police..just because you are Spanish [sic] they see you as troublemakers.</p> <p>I felt cops are prejudiced against immigrants</p> <p>I was unjustly beaten by a police officer..I was very drunk when they took me to the police station. ...in the car he started telling me things..I remember getting angry...maybe I responded to him...I don't remember..when we got off of the car he grab me and beat me.</p>	<p>Police enact law enforcement by which certain acts and persons became subjected to it (Hester & Eglin, 1992, p. 11)</p> <p>Police relations with racialized groups seem to be saddled with conflict, distrust, and bias.</p> <p>Relations have been racialized.</p> <p>Discriminatory and biased treatment has led to the over-policing of racialized groups.</p> <p>Circumstances of offenders from ethnic groups differ from those of the majority because many are victims of racism, discrimination, and are affected by poor social and economic conditions.</p>

Immigrant Youth's Perceptions of the Canadian Justice System
Continuation

Component	Perceptions, Feelings, Opinions	Theme
<p>Court Proceedings</p>	<p>People at court..they do the job for what they are being paid.. they do not care about if you are from a different culture.</p> <p>Judge treat me fairly</p> <p>They give information about what happens if you broke probation..no ..they do not tell your parents...it is up to you if you want to tell them.</p> <p>Some parents that do not speak English well don't know what is going on at court because everything is in English.</p> <p>If you are older than 16 [years of age] all the information about the process is given to you. If you want you tell your parents..if not they do not have ways to know that you are in trouble.</p> <p>I felt scared at court..I started crying because I didn't know what was going to happen to me there..</p> <p>I felt angry to be at court..because I was the only one being punished when the other guy was the one that started the fight.</p> <p>I knew what will happen at court...the police came to school and talked to us about what happens if you get in trouble.</p>	<p>The court develops the process of crime interpretation (Hester & Eglin, 1992, p. 11)</p> <p>Culture of the system: use of especial language. procedures.</p> <p>Unbalanced social relations.</p> <p>Lack of information for newcomers in how the systems work.</p>

Immigrant Youth's Perceptions of the Canadian Justice System

Continuation

Component	Perceptions, Feelings, Opinions	Theme
Sentence	<p>The sentence was not fair because I was the one charged and I didn't start the fight..I was defending my friend.</p> <p>I did community hours in an agency..I was just moving things around...it was boring.</p> <p>Probation doesn't help..you just go there or call them.</p> <p>It doesn't help with your problem.</p> <p>Probation is bad..it is just to control you.</p> <p>I have to wait six months to attend a course at John Howard Society..that at the end it didn't help me at all.</p> <p>My family send me to a private counselor..it has been helpful.</p>	<p>Describe the philosophy of sentencing of the Canadian Justice System.</p> <p>Probation as a measure was criticized by all participants.</p> <p>Alternative measures were perceived as not helpful.</p>
Correctional Services	<p>I was afraid..scared..it was like being in a cage..</p> <p>I was mad to be in prison...I stayed all the time in my cell...I did some weightlift..took a course. I really don't want to talk about prison.</p> <p>Being in prison makes you bitter..angry.. especially if you are there because you broke probation...it is useless.</p>	<p>Prison does not solve the problems</p> <p>The culture of the institution promotes more harmful than positive outcomes.</p>

Appendix 14

Immigrant Youth's Perceptions of the Need for Support and Services

At the Individual Level

For Immigrant Youth in General	For Immigrant Youth Involved with the Canadian Justice System
<p>Provide services that help them with their problems... anger management...drinking problems..services adapted to their own culture.</p> <p>Bring tutors from your own culture to help you with homework.</p> <p>Explain about the Canadian society.</p> <p>Bring someone to talk about their own experiences adapting here.</p> <p>Organize youth groups run by youth ..with support from parents.</p> <p>Create youth services for immigrant youth...that respond to their cultural needs.</p>	<p>Information about the CJS.</p> <p>Bring someone to explain what are the consequences in your life if you get in trouble..someone who have had that experience.</p> <p>Explain in different languages the effect of the probation.</p>

At the Family Level

<p>Talk to kids.. do things with them since they are little.</p> <p>Celebrate things together as families in your own ethnic group...make them feel part of your group ...be proud of their origins...and heritage.</p> <p>Parenting courses.</p> <p>Show kids you do really care...work with them...listen to them</p> <p>Teach kids not to be ashamed of your heritage... be proud of who you are... not to be ashamed.</p> <p>More involvement of parent at school.</p> <p>Link between own group and your community.</p> <p>Provide options for parents.. Not just tell them it is not good.</p> <p>Recognize when there are problems at home..look for help.</p> <p>Look for ways to address violence in the family ..drinking problems... negative cultural pattern.</p> <p>Encourage our children to education.</p>	<p>Show kids you do really care...work with them...listen to them</p> <p>Explain in different languages the effect of the probation</p> <p>Run information session for parents to understand what children are going through.</p> <p>Support for families whose children are in trouble(e.g.counselling).</p> <p>Explain to the whole family. in different languages, the process in which the youth is involved, the effects and implications if he do not comply with the sentence.</p>
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**Immigrant Youth's Perceptions of the Need for Support and Services
Continuation**

At the Community Level

For Immigrant Youth in General	For Immigrant Youth Involved with the Canadian Justice System
<p><i>School</i> Teachers and school counsellors should be aware of the cultural background of students. Create support systems at school for newcomers children. Create way of communications with parents of immigrant children that reflect their cultural needs. Involve parents in school activities. Look for way to address issues of racism and discrimination at school.</p> <p><i>Latin American Community</i> Encourage parents to be actively involved in the community. Encourage community organizing and participation. We need to organize ourselves to have representation and voice. Find ways to denounce racism and discrimination at the workplace, school, and other areas.</p>	<p>Support after school programs for all children but especially for youth in problem with the law.</p> <p>Access to recreational services and after school activities.</p>

**Immigrant Youth's Perceptions of the Need for Support and Services
Continuation.**

At the Society level

For Immigrant Youth in General	For Immigrant Youth Involved with the Canadian Justice System
<p>Organize immigrant youth services with representatives from all cultures.</p> <p>More information in own languages for recent immigrants.</p> <p>Provide recreational activities adapted to the needs of immigrant youth.</p> <p>Latino coffee house where you can play games.</p> <p>Create community organizations that run seminars or programs that capture youth creativity...like computers courses ...something they do not find at home or school.</p> <p>Restore funding for ESL classes.</p> <p>Some services are not adapted to the needs of immigrants</p> <p>Long waiting list to access some services: counseling.</p> <p>Educate ourselves in the Canadian ways: laws, health, work, what our rights are.</p> <p>The Latin American community needs to learn more about the Canadian Justice System.</p>	<p>Education to the CJS about the needs of immigrant families. It is not enough just to use translators... it is the attitude of those working there.</p> <p>Services in general should change the way services are provided... probation doesn't help..it is useless..</p> <p>Have people who understand your culture in the police..the court.. because they will understand you better.</p> <p>There are services...what is need is a coordination ..integration between these services... to think in the needs of the child instead of thinking as programs.</p> <p>Support services for youth who have been in prison and are now looking for work</p> <p>Find root causes ...family violence...why children have too much free time.. Programs to combat poverty.</p> <p>Offer well-paid jobs for families</p> <p>Justice in the justice system.... not all the Spanish speaking people is bad.</p> <p>The CJS needs to learn from us.</p>

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