OVERVIEW OF PART II

The six articles in Part II examine the response of the child welfare, health, and youth justice systems to issues surrounding the safety, health, and well-being of children and youth. In the first paper (Chapter 5), Mike Boyes, Joseph P. Hornick, and Nancy Ogden discuss the results of their evaluation of a sample of Healthy Families early intervention projects. They note that while crime prevention models have included early intervention as a component, the incorporation of a development perspective is new. The development perspective provides insights into longitudinal causal mechanisms related to the risk of involvement in criminal behaviour. They note the importance of identifying risk and protective factors but argue that we must go beyond simply identifying these to developing a greater understanding of the multiple contexts in which development occurs.

Boyes, Hornick, and Ogden then define what they mean by developmental prevention and consider how this concept can be used in crime prevention. They examine a number of specific programs that address such factors as stress, family functioning, and child development. The Healthy Start program in Hawaii is discussed in this context. They emphasize the fact that longitudinal reviews of developmental and early intervention approaches have been shown to be very effective.

In the next paper (Chapter 6), Sibylle Artz, Diana Nicholson, Elaine Halsall, and Susan Larke draw on a number of studies they have conducted that focus on the perspectives, experiences, and needs of children and youth. These include a project focusing on the development of a gender-sensitive tool for needs assessment as well as a project that examined the experiences of children and youth with school and community-based violence. They note that conducting needs assessments and matching needs to services is difficult, pointing out that needs are often confused with risks and that the child welfare system is paying attention to assessing and reducing risk. They argue that this puts additional emphasis on the process of conducting appropriate needs assessments.

Artz, Nicholson, Halsall, and Larke go on to review four key policy documents that address current responses to children and youth. They discuss the following factors that have contributed to the success of interventions: positive partnerships; working with, not for, children and youth; exploring promising practices; and employing caring and collaboration approaches. Their research shows that the programs they examined have been extremely successful, contributing among other things, to a 40-50% reduction in school-based violence. The development of a gender-sensitive needs assessment tool was seen as extremely important. They also stress the need for a participatory approach to research and point out that despite cuts in funding many of the projects they have been involved with continue to work effectively because of the efforts and commitment of those involved.

In Chapter 7, Yasmin Jiwani, Helene Berman, and Catherine Ann Cameron present the results of their work as part of the Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence. Their focus was on violence and the Canadian girl child. They begin with a discussion of

the social and historical context of the girl child and then describe the methodological and theoretical basis of their research. They present the details of their findings as well as a discussion of the policy and programming implications of their work. Jiwani, Berman, and Cameron argue that unless policies, programs, and practices are especially gender sensitive, they may not be hitting the mark. Indeed, they caution us about generic violence prevention programs.

Jiwani, Berman, and Cameron conclude by noting that the research undertaken by the Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence shows an urgent need to direct funding and services to address the situation of girls in this country, especially as this relates to protecting them from violence. They provide a detailed and extensive set of recommendations, addressed to all levels of government, that provide insight and direction for future developments in this area.

In Chapter 8, Bernard Schissel discusses the consequences for young people in the criminal justice system. He argues that children and youth are treated as political and economic scapegoats in our society. In particular, he states that this scapegoating is racialized with serious consequences for African-Canadian, Aboriginal, and other non-white children and youth. To support this claim, he presents his research on young offender files including a subset of young people, mainly street youth from Saskatoon, charged for being involved in the sex trade. According to Schissel, the results show extremely negative consequences for these young people at the hands of the justice system.

Schissel concludes by asking how powerful people end up stigmatizing and controlling young people either intentionally or unintentionally. The impact of such actions is especially significant for youth living on the margins of society such as street youth. He states that the actions of the powerful represent a moral condemnation of these young people, identifying them as less deserving and redeemable than others. He argues that changes to the justice system must be based on a profound understanding of the impact that poverty, racism, and marginality have on youth.

Next, Susan Reid, in Chapter 9, presents a detailed review of some of the risk and protective factors discussed in the literature on youth crime and victimization. She argues that if we are serious about supporting resilient youth, we should tap into the potential that exists in our communities. According to Reid, we are segregated into age specific categories, which tend to isolate us from each other and may lead to mistrust and even to hostility. She explores how making connections with others could help high-risk youth address their own risk factors and increase their resiliency. More specifically, she looks at the potential for reducing the distance between young people and older adults. She also explores the possibility of involving high-risk youth in working with other young people, based on her work on peer helping done in conjunction with the National Youth In Care Network. Reid stresses that when we attempt to intervene in the lives of young people, we should strive to reinforce the bonds that exist between young people, their siblings, friends, and adults in their communities.

Finally, in Chapter 10, Sylvie Hamel, Marie-Marthe Cousineau, and Sophie Léveillée, in collaboration with Martine Vézina and Julie Savignac, focus on youth involvement in gangs. They discuss their experience with the Youth and Street Gangs Project which was based on a participatory research approach. This project responded to youth gangs through a community-based crime prevention program using a social development strategy. Community groups and young people in three communities in the Greater Montréal area participated in pilot projects. Hamel, Cousineau, Léveillée, Vézina, and Savignac provide a detailed account of how this project was conceived and developed, including a consideration of the methodology used and the theoretical models employed. The authors' experience in this project highlights a number of key issues involved in the justice system response to youth, especially with respect to gang members who represent a serious challenge to community safety.