

**AN EMPIRICAL EVALUATION OF THE RCMP'S YOUTH INTERVENTION  
AND DIVERSION STRATEGY IN NEW BRUNSWICK**

by

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## **Abstract**

The present dissertation is an evaluation of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) Youth Intervention and Diversion (YID) strategy with justice-involved youth in the province of New Brunswick. The YID strategy aims to divert youth away from the criminal justice system and into community-based programs to address identified criminogenic needs, with the goal of reducing future contact with law enforcement. This strategy operates under the Risk-Need-Responsivity model of effective offender case management (RNR; Andrews & Bonta, 2010a). Using a combined methods approach, the outcomes and processes of the YID strategy were evaluated. Police files were accessed to obtain police contact records, youth risk assessments and case plans for 100 diverted (YID) youth. Police contact records of 100 non-diverted (non-YID) youth were accessed to serve as a comparison group. The archival information was used to explore the characteristics of YID youth and the impact of diversion involvement on recidivism rates. Case plans were also assessed for adherence to the RNR model. Contextual information regarding the processes of YID was gathered from an interview with a former youth participant of the program. Results indicated that YID youth did not differ significantly from non-YID youth on rates of recidivism, or the time to first re-contact with police. However, when YID youth did reoffend, they committed less serious antisocial acts than non-YID youth. Adherence rates to the overall RNR model were low. Specifically, low adherence was observed for the Risk and Need principles. There was not enough information available to code the Responsivity principle. Qualitative data ( $n = 1$ ) revealed two themes highlighting some procedural deficiencies within the process as well as the positive impact the program can have on youth. Results have been

used to develop recommendations to improve the RCMP YID strategy in the province of New Brunswick and to consider when implementing the YID strategy in other jurisdictions.

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An empirical evaluation of the Youth Intervention and Diversion strategy employed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the Province of New Brunswick

### **Introduction**

Of all persons in Canada accused of a crime by police in 2014, 94,100 were youth aged 12 to 17 years, which accounts for 4,016 accused per 100,000 youth population (Boyce, 2015); this rate is a 9% reduction compared to 2013. This recent decline in youth crime continues the general trend over the last 10 years of a decreasing number of youth involved in the criminal justice system, down 42% since the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* was originally implemented (Boyce, 2015). Similarly, the overall severity of youth offences decreased in 2014 in all provinces and territories except for the Yukon (Boyce, 2015). Lower rates of offending were observed in most forms of violent crime (e.g., homicide, assault) and nonviolent crime (e.g., theft under \$5,000, property damage, break and enter). Despite the declining rate of youth crime, adolescent offenders continue to consume a large proportion of government services, including child welfare funding, time spent in courtrooms and custody, special education funding, as well as mental health resources (e.g., Lawson & Katz, 2004).

Adolescence is an important developmental period during which an increased level of antisocial behaviour (e.g., underage drinking, minor theft) is often observed for many youth (Welsh, Schmidt, McKinnon, Chattha & Meyers, 2008). However, multiple sources note that the frequency of self-reported antisocial acts tends to peak in late adolescence and shows a gradual decrease after the age of 18 (e.g., Piquero, Hawkins, & Kazemian, 2012). Additionally, the severity of these antisocial behaviours tends to decrease for the majority of individuals after late adolescence

(e.g., theft under \$5000 at age 17, shoplifting at age 25; Piquero et al., 2012). The percentage of youth who continue to commit chronic criminal offences as adults is relatively small, ranging between 4-13%, depending on the sample studied (e.g., Bergman & Andershed, 2009; Bersani, Nieuwbeerta, & Luab, 2009; D'Unger, Land & McCall, 2002; Livingston, Stewart, Allard, & Ogilvie, 2008; Piquero, Farrington, & Blumstein, 2007; Stattin, Kerr, & Bergman, 2010). Thus, the majority of youth who commit offences in adolescence are not likely to become career criminals. Given that most youth desist on their own, they likely do not need serious sanctions like incarceration to deter them from a criminal path. The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* of Canada (2002) acknowledges that not all youths are persistent offenders and includes provisions to divert some youth away from the criminal justice system in an effort to avoid criminalizing those who commit minor forms of delinquency. These provisions will be addressed in detail in a later section.

### **Interventions for Justice-Involved Youth**

The psychosocial histories of youth who become involved in the criminal justice system are typically complex and include deficiencies in multiple areas, such as family dysfunction, peer socialization issues, history of victimization, substance abuse, mental illness, as well as maladaptive problem solving skills (Hussey, Drinkard, Falletta, & Flannery, 2008). Youth with multiple areas of difficulty have been shown to have poorer outcomes (e.g., higher rates of reoffending behaviour) than those who have one or two deficient areas (Hussey et al., 2008). To reduce the risk of reoffending in those youth who are classified as “at-risk for reoffending”, various primary, secondary and tertiary prevention programs have been developed both

within, and external to, the criminal justice system. Within the last 25 years, two main trends have emerged in an effort to handle justice-involved youth after their first criminal justice contact: 1) punishment and sanctions, and 2) rehabilitation and reintegration programming.

### **Punishment and sanctions.**

One approach to targeting youth crime involves the use of harsh penalties and lessening of barriers for the referral of youth for adult sentencing. This punitive approach represents a classical theory approach to crime in that criminal acts are understood as wilful behaviours (i.e., deliberate choices made by the youth regardless of vulnerability factors) and the only appropriate response is to impose sanctions on the offender to punish his/her choices (Corrado, 1992). Under this approach, the focus lies on the appropriate legal response to the behaviour, and the use of incarceration as the best method to ensure public safety. Rehabilitation needs and concern for the individual offender are minimized and rarely considered under this type of approach (Hoge, 2009).

Criminal sanctions are used in the punitive approach under the presumption that they will deter the offender, as well as others in society, from engaging in illegal behaviour (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Sellers, 2015). The punitive standpoint endorses values of coercion, control, discipline and retribution in an attempt to suppress delinquency through fear of consequences (Sellers, 2015). This viewpoint posits that the consequence of harsh prison life and mandatory minimum sentences for criminal behaviour will carry enough weight that potential offenders will choose to avoid a criminal lifestyle (Gendreau, Goggin, & Cullen, 1999). Furthermore, there is a push

for the sanction/punishment to be proportionate to the crime, as it must be “fair and just” (Andrews & Bonta, 2003). Some research has noted that sanctions may reduce recidivism for a small number of youth who come into contact with the law, but it has yet to be determined for whom they best work and under what circumstances (Hoge, 2009). It is more widely agreed that punitive criminal justice sanctions have not resulted in consistent reductions in recidivism and incarceration has actually demonstrated negative impacts on youth functioning as reflected by higher recidivism rates (Andrews, Zinger et al., 1990; Andrews & Dowden, 2007; Hoge, 2009; Vieira, Skilling, Peterson-Badali, 2009). For example, in a meta-analysis by Gendreau and colleagues (1999) of 50 studies with a total of 336,052 offenders, incarceration was associated with higher rates of recidivism upon release compared to community-based restrictions (e.g., probation), with even higher rates being associated with longer sentences (e.g., 30 months vs. 12 months).

There have been arguments that the “tough on crime” agenda restores the public’s faith in the criminal justice system, as punishments are what the public expects for those who break society’s rules and norms (Andrews & Bonta, 2003). As with the effect of incarceration, the presence of minimum sentence laws and the general idea of being “tough on crime” have not demonstrated any positive impact on crime rates. In fact, the “tough on crime” agenda has led to more youth cases being referred to court, resulting in increased congestion within the criminal justice system (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Dembo, Wareham, Schmeidler, & Chirikos, 2005). Despite public expectations, punitive sanctions (i.e., incarceration, “shock incarceration”, boot camps) are not consistently effective at reducing recidivism and their effect sizes for

such reductions are generally small (Latimer, Dowden, Morton-Bourgon, Edgar, & Bania, 2003; Tarolla, Wagner, Rabinowitz, & Tubman, 2002).

The lack of empirical support for the use of punishments on recidivism rates has been addressed by behaviourism and social learning theories; in order for any punishment to be effective, the consequences need to be of maximum intensity, implemented immediately, consistently applied, not have any reinforcing properties or opportunity to escape them, and they need to interact with individual characteristics in a meaningful way (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a). These guidelines for effective punishments are rarely seen within the criminal justice system and the punishment becomes less effective as the integrity of these guidelines decreases.

In addition to the limited effect of punitive sanctions on recidivism, cost-benefit evaluations have demonstrated that harsher sanctions for young offenders do not evidence net positive benefits for either the justice system or the victims and others involved in the criminal event (Fass & Pi, 2002). Research reviews have noted that high incarceration rates of youth offenders may not produce a net benefit to society given that housing youth in criminal institutions is costly (e.g., Lawson & Katz, 2004). In fact, even a community-based intensive supervision program was found to be the least cost effective when compared to other community-based programs for youth and young adult offenders in Washington State (e.g., Functional Family Therapy, restorative justice; Welsh et al., 2012). This intensive supervision program showed a return of \$0.43 on each \$1.00 invested (Welsh et al., 2012). Romani, Morgan, Gross, and McDonald (2012) conducted a cost-benefit analysis of traditional punishment provided by the correctional system (e.g., custodial sentences)

and found that it was the least cost-effective method, requiring \$40 of investment funds to produce a 1% reduction in recidivism rates. In contrast, correctional services that addressed deficits in psychosocial functioning required only \$2 of investment funds to see a 1% decrease in recidivism rates. An additional challenge of using custodial and other punitive sanctions with youth is that these methods place them in close quarters with other young offenders, which increases their contact with antisocial peers and exposes them to an environment that further reinforces procriminal attitudes (Hoge, 2009).

The negative impacts of sanctions also do not end when the youths complete their term, since they often continue to face a multitude of obstacles in the pursuit of a crime-free life after release. Researchers have reported that youth processed through the criminal justice system emerge with a label (e.g., young offender, youth sex offender, criminal, delinquent) and subsequently face stigmatization and difficulty reintegrating with non-criminal, pro-social youth due to that label. Furthermore, this stigmatization can have a cascading effect with youth experiencing increased emotional stress, limited prosocial peer exposure, and greater amounts of unproductive free time in non-prosocial activities due to these reintegration problems (Caldwell & Dickenson, 2009). As a result, many youth who have been processed through the criminal justice system end up returning to a criminal lifestyle because it is easier to maintain old familiar habits than it is to face the numerous challenges inherent to changing behaviour patterns, and adopting a new, prosocial peer group.

**Rehabilitation and reintegration.**

An alternative approach to handling justice-involved youth is the provision of rehabilitation and restorative justice options (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007). Programs based on this approach place emphasis on addressing risk factors in the youth's life by means of intervention services, while also balancing accountability for the youth's actions in accordance with his/her developmental stage (Corrado, 1992; Corrado, Gronsdahl, MacAlister, & Cohen, 2010). Importance is also placed on the integration of the legal and child welfare systems under this model, which is critical of the fragmented systems that are typically encountered by justice-involved youth (Hoge, 2009). Within this framework there is support for directing youth away from the criminal justice system when appropriate to do so, consistent with the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (2002), and for broader discretion to be used by professionals who work with justice-involved youth to determine the most appropriate response for the youth's illegal behaviour (Corrado et al., 2010). Specifically, the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* endorses enhanced punishments for more serious crimes, but for less serious crimes allows for diversion away from the criminal justice system and into rehabilitation to address risk factors for future criminal behaviour (Hoge, 2009; Wilson & Hoge, 2013a).

Within Canada, diversion practices were initially conducted informally under the *Juvenile Delinquents Act* (1908) in the 1970s. During this period, police dealt with adolescents who had committed offences that were deemed to be "a function of their immaturity" (Maclure, Campbell, & Dufresne, 2003, p. 137). Diverting youth into community programs was viewed as serving a dual purpose: accountability for actions



and opportunity for rehabilitation (Maclure et al., 2003). In the early 1980s, officials decided to formally encourage and regulate the diversion of youth away from the criminal justice system as reflected in the *Young Offenders Act's* (1985) emphasis on offering a “humane and socially useful way to deal” with justice-involved youth (Maclure et al., 2003, p. 137). Currently, under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* pre-charge diversion options exist for youth who are charged with minor offences. For example, the most commonly diverted youth are those who have committed property crime (e.g., vandalism; Greene, 2011).

The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (2002) contains specific principles and mandated requirements that guide police officers in their interactions with youth. When deciding whether or not to arrest or recommend the Crown to lay a charge against a youth<sup>1</sup>, police officers are encouraged to remember that they have an opportunity to influence a young person’s life in a positive and meaningful way by responding to the situation in a non-punitive manner. Extrajudicial measures are described in the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (2002) as avenues other than traditional court proceedings that are used to handle a youth who has allegedly committed an offence. The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (2002) states that extrajudicial measures are required to be considered before any arrest or charge is laid against a youth. As outlined in an operational manual for the RCMP J Division (New Brunswick), extrajudicial measures are to be considered, regardless of whether the youth has committed previous offences, whether they have received previous warnings or

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<sup>1</sup> In the province of New Brunswick, the Crown Prosecutor’s Office is the institution that decides whether to lay a charge against an individual after receiving a recommendation to charge from the police service. In other jurisdictions across Canada, police agencies may directly lay charges against an individual.

cautions, and whether the youth has previously participated in an intervention and diversion program (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2012). Furthermore, the manual states that each youth is to be dealt with in isolation, in the event of a group of youth committing an offence. The police officer is to determine the least intrusive intervention possible and one that is proportionate to the offence committed, in accordance with the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*. There are multiple extrajudicial measure options for a young person under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*. The first option is to “take no further action”, in which the officer is satisfied at the end of his/her investigation that no further action is needed to address the youth’s behaviour. Second, the officer can either provide an informal police warning or provide a formal caution to the youth. Formal cautions require paperwork to be completed by the officers and copies are distributed to the RCMP, the youth, and the youth’s guardian(s) to keep record of the police contact outcome. The youth does not need to accept responsibility for the offence in order for a formal caution to be provided. Third, an officer has the ability to directly refer a youth to community programs as part of an extrajudicial measure to address criminogenic needs and other factors influencing the youth’s risk of future criminal behaviour. Finally, the officer has the authority, under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, to convene a case conference. Section 19 of the *Act* (2002) stipulates that a police officer can convene a conference to aid the decision making process for determining the best way to provide meaningful consequences for a youth’s actions. Officers have the authority to seek advice from anyone whom they feel can provide assistance in reducing the likelihood of the youth reoffending. Specifically, subsection 19.1 provides this direction for the officer to

consult with other individuals and agencies (e.g., medical, school, and mental health professionals) and also permits youth intervention and diversion committees to convene, which allows multiple sources of information to come together in one venue to be considered.

A Statistics Canada report indicated that in 2013-2014, 55% of youth who were recommended for charging by police officers were diverted toward counselling programs and then released, or were referred to a formal alternative measures diversion program (Boyce, 2015). Thus, policing agencies and other criminal justice professionals are following the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* diversion process, making it important to evaluate the impact of these programs on recidivism risk reduction among youths. When evaluating the impact of diversion programs, it is first important to examine the effectiveness of community-based intervention programs that youth are being referred to in an attempt to reduce the risk of future criminal behaviour.

### **Overview of Youth Community-Based Intervention Programs**

Research has demonstrated that programs operating within community contexts and which focus on criminogenic needs are more effective than similar programs that operate within institutions, because primarily community-based service providers appear to use more evidence-based methods than institutional service providers (DeMatteo, LaDuke, Locklair, & Heilbrun, 2013). Several community-based services have been developed to respond to justice-involved youth, including programs that aim to divert youth away from the criminal justice system and address risk factors within a youth's environment (e.g., difficulties with family members, antisocial peer group, alcohol or drug problems).

**Boot camps, “Scared Straight” and wilderness programs.**

Some of the methods used to intervene with justice-involved youth have been strongly embraced by the public at large, including boot camps, “Scared Straight” programs, and wilderness-based programs (Bottcher & Ezell, 2005). Boot camps are short-term programs that have a military orientation and emphasize the value of routine, discipline and hard work as a means to overcome criminal behaviours, typically delivered in an aggressive manner (e.g., shouting orders at youth; Bottcher & Ezell, 2005; Sellers, 2015). Farrington and Welsh (2005) conducted a systematic review of four boot camp experiments and found that none of the programs produced a significant reduction in reoffending rates. Other researchers have reported similar results, finding an average effect size close to zero for reducing recidivism for both youth and adult boot camps in a sample of American programs (Welsh et al., 2012) and finding no significant differences between Californian youth in a boot camp and youth with standard custody sentences (Bottcher & Ezell, 2005). Peters and colleagues (1997) examined a Cleveland youth boot camp and compared participants’ recidivism rates with youth who were confined in youth detention centres. A 44% increase in reoffending rates was reported for youth who attended the boot camp program compared with youth confined in service facilities (Peters, Thomas, & Zamberlan, 1997). An increase of approximately 7% in recidivism rates also was found in a meta-analysis of Canadian boot camps (Latimer et al., 2003).

Similar to boot camps, “Scared Straight” programs also use an aggressive approach to intervening with justice-involved youth. These programs centre on adult prisoners using fear tactics and aggressive language to scare justice-involved youth

out of a criminal pathway by regaling them with stories of how harsh life in prison is for criminals (Farrington & Welsh, 2005). Although some programs have claimed successful abstinence from reoffending in up to 94% of their participants (Sellers, 2015), systematic reviews of “Scared Straight” program experiments in the United States have consistently demonstrated higher reoffending rates of youth participants after program completion, ranging between 7 and 21%, compared to control groups (Farrington & Welsh, 2005; Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, & Buehler, 2003).

Another approach designed to intervene with justice-involved youth is wilderness camps. There are many variations of the wilderness program but they each endorse the belief that, when faced with difficult physical challenges and supported by peers and team leaders, youth can display responsible, competent behaviour. This behaviour is theorized to generalize to other situations with experience and continued support from others (Tarolla et al., 2002). Wilderness programs typically focus on decreasing prosocial isolation and increasing positive self-concept and problem-solving skills (Tarolla et al., 2002). The most effective wilderness programs, identified through meta-analytic methods (e.g., reducing recidivism by 8% compared to a control group), are those that involve activities that challenge the youth’s skills at an appropriate level (e.g., building up patterns of success through accomplishing physical tasks) and include a group component that consists of positive, prosocial interactions with peers and the development of problem-solving skills (Wilson & Lipsey, 2000). This type of program is grounded in experiential learning. It is argued that the therapeutic role of group learning enhances the self-confidence and problem-solving skills that are learned through the physical challenges of the program. When a

wilderness camp contains these two key components (i.e., appropriate physical challenges and distinct group therapy segments), there appears to be tentative support for their effectiveness. However, the results of a meta-analysis by Wilson and Lipsey (2000) were based primarily on unpublished studies with adolescent Caucasian males and thus the generalizability of findings is limited. In addition, a plateau in effectiveness was observed in programs that were held over longer periods of time. Specifically, wilderness programs that were longer than ten weeks had smaller effect sizes than those that were six weeks or fewer, demonstrating that constructing longer programs did not appear to enhance program effectiveness. Counter to the tentative supporting evidence for the effectiveness of wilderness programs, Latimer and colleagues (2003) found that youth who participated in wilderness programs actually showed a 9% increase in recidivism, compared to control groups. Overall, despite their popularity with the public, boot camps, “Scared Straight” programs and wilderness camps do not have a strong empirical background to support their continued use (Tarolla et al., 2002).

### **Restorative Justice programs.**

Another popular community-based alternative approach to traditional justice responses to youth crime that has a more solid research foundation is restorative justice. Restorative justice began to emerge within criminal justice contexts around the world during the late 1970s. The process of restorative justice predominantly integrates Japanese collectivist cultural features, Aboriginal traditional beliefs of community harmony and personal balance, and Mennonite faith-based reconciliation efforts (Boyes-Watson, 2005; Katz, 2000; Lawson & Katz, 2004). Restorative justice

has become a commonly used alternative to legal sanctions and is composed of non-punitive approaches which are designed to hold youth accountable for their actions by addressing and repairing the harm done to the community and to the victim of the offence, with a specific focus on healing the relationships between all involved parties (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Bailin & Battersby, 2009; Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007; Boyes-Watson, 2005; Robinson & Shapland, 2008; Rodogno, 2008; Welsh et al., 2008). The restorative justice process operates under the presumption that, regardless of the type of crime, there is an agreed upon violation of a rule, societal norm, or law that has taken place (Boyes-Watson, 2005; Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather, & Platow, 2008). This event is viewed as a violation of interpersonal relationships between all those involved (i.e., the offender, the victim, their extended support networks, and the community within which the offence took place). Furthermore, the violation is viewed as having created an obligation that needs to be fulfilled with reparations to the community and/or the victim. These reparations are not required to be particularly burdensome and may be more symbolic to parallel the harm done by the offender (de Beus & Rodriguez, 2007; Rodogno, 2008). Therefore, restorative justice requirements are flexible and can be altered to match different offence types and offender contexts, individualizing the process (Wenzel et al., 2008).

There are a number of different approaches to restorative justice (e.g., family group conferences, victim-offender mediation, sentencing and healing circles), but each generally shares key process characteristics including a focus on community-based sanctions, a non-adversarial and relatively informal approach to the process, facilitation of dialogue between involved parties, relationship building, clear

communication, and decision-making via consensus agreement (Bailin & Battersby, 2009; Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007; Kuo, Longmire, & Cuvelier, 2010; Mutter, Shemmings, Dugmore, & Hyare, 2008; Welsh et al., 2012). Within those characteristics, it is important to highlight the essential feature of any restorative justice process: the victim of the offence plays a central role in conference discussions and the outcome decisions (Lawson & Katz, 2004). A trained mediator is also involved in a restorative justice conference and is typically either a police officer, a community volunteer or a professional staff member from the court or criminal justice system (Lawson & Katz, 2004). It is not necessary that offenders admit guilt for committing an offence in the restorative justice process, but they are required to accept responsibility for the harm caused by the action or consequences ensuing after the fact (Rodogno, 2008). Restorative justice aims to avoid the emotions of anger, humiliation, and disgust, and, instead engage the emotions of remorse, guilt, shame, empathy, and hope (Rodogno, 2008).

Restitution within restorative justice approaches can take many forms, including repayment of financial losses incurred by the victim, performance of community service work, or taking on specific tasks that would be of some benefit to the victim (Lawson & Katz, 2004). Advocates of restorative measures consider the use of restitution to be more constructive and meaningful for the offender than traditional court sanctions because they require the offender to do something for the victim or community, rather than simply serving time in custody or paying a fine to the government (Wenzel et al., 2008). Restitution has been argued to increase the likelihood that offenders will accept responsibility for the harm to the victim and the



community that resulted from their actions. Restorative justice conferences also provide offenders with an opportunity to show remorse and offer an apology. The use of restorative measures and the engagement of multiple parties in the process emphasizes the notion that young people are able to participate fully in the community, even though they have committed an offence (Lo, Maxwell, & Wong, 2006).

Some researchers (e.g., Sandor, 1994; Warner, 1998) have noted that the lack of formal court presence and due process in restorative justice programs may result in the justice-involved youth's rights being violated, as these aspects of the traditional criminal justice system are supposed to protect the rights of offenders. Additionally, concern has been raised about whether police officers have an undue influence on who is and is not referred to the restorative justice processes as they are provided a highly important role in that decision making process (Lo et al., 2006). These critics argue that the subjectivity and lack of formality in many restorative justice programs allows for too much discretion and are concerned that police officers may unfairly decide to divert some youth and legally process others (i.e., based on race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status; Lo et al., 2006). However, this criticism could be extended to the discretion permitted with reference to most events to which police officers respond. Thus, bias in the use of police discretion is an important aspect to keep in mind for restorative justice, but is not a crippling or unique criticism to this process.

Empirical research on the restorative justice process has repeatedly demonstrated high rates of victim and offender satisfaction with the outcome of conferences (Latimer, Dowden & Muise, 2005; Lawson & Katz, 2004; Wenzel et al.,

2008). Additionally, completion rates for restorative justice restitution agreements have been very high, ranging from 75% to 90% (e.g., Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007; de Beus & Rodriguez, 2007; Lawson & Katz, 2004). Offenders have been more likely to admit guilt to an offence or a breach of morals during the restorative justice process compared to cases in the traditional criminal justice system. Through the admission of guilt, offenders have been more likely to reaffirm their commitment to meeting the standards of community morality and their apologies are generally accepted and viewed as sincere by victims of the offence (Sherman et al., 2005). Contact between the victim and offender is normalized within restorative justice conferences and victims generally deny feeling re-victimized throughout the process, especially when restorative justice is used for cases involving low-level crime (Sherman et al., 2005).

The ultimate goal of restorative justice programs is to reconcile the issues that produce conflict between the offender and the victim, rather than to explicitly reduce reoffending rates (Sellers, 2015; Welsh et al., 2012). Nonetheless, restorative justice has demonstrated some evidence of recidivism reduction, including rates that fall below the national averages in both Canada and the United States (e.g., Andrews & Bonta, 2003; de Beus & Rodriguez, 2007; Katz, 2000; Latimer et al., 2005; Lawson & Katz, 2004; McGarrell, 2001). However, recidivism reduction data are not always consistent (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007). As demonstrated in a review of restorative justice, Bonta, Wallace-Capretta, and Rooney (1998) found recidivism reduction effect sizes for restorative justice programs ranged from .07 to .30 with higher effect sizes found in studies with stronger methods (e.g., random assignment to groups). Overall, meta-analyses of restorative justice effects provide support for the process as

an alternative to traditional court processing, but these results also highlight the importance of strong study design characteristics (e.g., random assignment, monitored completion of restorative measures; matching intervention and comparison group on key demographic variables) in the evaluation of restorative justice programs (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007; Latimer et al., 2005).

### **Teen courts.**

A branch of the restorative justice process, known as teen court, has emerged as another alternative for handling justice-involved youth in the community. Teen courts generally hear the cases of first time young offenders who have committed minor offences (Wilson, Gottfredson, & Stickle, 2009). These courts emphasize trial by one's peers, with youth volunteers sitting in the court roles of council, jurors, bailiff, clerk, and judge (Forgays, 2008). Peer jurors provide offenders with options of prosocial community activities for their "sentence" with the goal of enhancing the individual's commitment to the community. The offender and jurors may collaborate to develop this "sentence" so that it reflects community values to help increase the offender's attachment to the community. Typically, a portion of the offender's "sentence" requires participation in a certain number of teen court proceedings as a juror so that justice-involved youth have an opportunity to participate in the process in a positive, prosocial role. The ultimate goal of this process is to make offenders less willing to commit antisocial acts due to an enhanced understanding of community values and a sense of belonging (Forgays, 2008). Research has demonstrated that repeat offenders who participated in a restorative justice teen court had higher sentence completion rates (e.g., 71–92%) and lower rates of recidivism than first-time

offenders who experienced the traditional court process youth during a three-year follow-up (Forgays, 2008; Forgays & DeMilio, 2005; Wilson et al., 2009).

**Diversion programs.**

A final community-based method with which to manage justice-involved youth that is explicitly referenced in the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* is diversion through the use of extrajudicial measures. Diversion programs promote the ideas of delegalization, decarceration, decategorization and deprofessionalization of individuals, including youth, who become involved with the criminal justice system (Lo et al., 2006). Diversion has been described as any process that is used within the criminal justice system to avoid formal court processing and adjudication of an individual who has come into contact with the system, while still holding individuals accountable for their actions (e.g., Béchard, Ireland, Berg, & Vogel, 2011; Broner, Lattimore, Cowell, & Schlenger, 2004; Campbell & Retzlaff, 2000; Colwell, Villarreal, & Espinosa, 2012; Cuellar, McReynolds, & Wasserman, 2006; Greene, 2011; Whittington, Haines, & McGuire, 2015). This concept has been used since the 1960s in various jurisdictions (Béchard et al., 2011; Greene, 2011; Katz, 2000). There are two main types of diversion programs, each offering different levels of intervention intensity. The first type of diversion is comprised of no more than a verbal caution or a warning and is the least invasive form. The second type is a more formal approach in that there are eligibility requirements, including an admission of guilt or responsibility, and may result in conditions being placed on the individual, including participation in intervention programming, and/or some form of supervision (Wilson & Hoge, 2013a). The intent of diversion programs is to alter the course of

antisocial behaviour pathways by either directing youth away from the traditional criminal justice system entirely, or by minimizing their contact with this system and increasing access to community treatment, housing, and other support services (Broner et al., 2004; Joudo, 2008; Whittington et al., 2015). Justification for the current use of diversion as an alternative to the traditional criminal justice system stems from the presence of an inefficient court system and the rising costs of detention and incarceration. Diversion processes aim to reduce the contact time an individual has with the court and correctional systems, which lightens the workloads of the justice-related professionals and reduces court and prison costs (Joudo, 2008). Furthermore, it is well documented that there are negative effects of involvement with the criminal justice system on individuals who are treated like serious delinquent offenders but who, in reality, are of low risk to reoffend (e.g., stigmatization; Hodges, Martin, Smith, & Cooper, 2011; Joudo, 2008). The primary goal of youth diversion when it first came into use was to reduce the risk associated with being labelled as a delinquent resulting from interactions with the criminal justice system (Bécharde et al., 2011; Campbell & Retzlaff, 2000; Patrick, Marsh, Bundy, Mimura, & Perkins, 2004; Sullivan, Veysey, Hamilton, & Grillo, 2007). With reference to its use with justice-involved youth, the implementation of diversion was intended to give youth and their parents a choice between a less severe sanction (diversion) and a more uncertain result of a juvenile court trial (Campbell & Retzlaff, 2000).

Across program manuals and legal policies, there have been a multitude of definitions for diversion. The most general definition for diversion was originally provided by Binder and Geis (1984), who described the process as “an alternative to

further processing in the justice system for an alleged young offender” (p. 625).

However, since the 1990s diversion has become more complex and varied than what was portrayed by the Binder and Geis (1984) definition. Diversion programs differ substantially across a number of components, including the point of entry into the process (e.g., referral from police officers, “sentence” from court, referred from probation), how charges are dealt with (e.g., expunged, fully adjudicated), the target population (e.g., youth, mental illness, substance users, sexual offenders), the purpose of the diversion (e.g., secure placement, treatment), and the primary interventions used (e.g., restitution, restorative justice, treatment/intervention; Coccozza et al., 2005). The diversion process can happen at any point after a youth has come to the attention of the police or other community authorities (i.e., pre-arrest, post-arrest/pre-trial, pre-sentence and post-sentence; Broner et al., 2004; Colwell et al., 2012; Joudo, 2008). Diversion is most often voluntary but also can be mandatory, and the consequences for not completing the diversionary recommendations can range from no consequences at all to having the matter return to regular judicial processing and detention at a juvenile custodial facility (Binder & Geis, 1984; Waters, 2007).

Diversionary practices also can include verbal warnings or cautions provided by the arresting police body (Wilson & Hoge, 2013a) and/or referral directly to community programs to address deficient areas within an individual’s circumstances (Wilson & Hoge, 2013b). An individual can be referred to a wide range of programs and services depending on his/her specific circumstances. For example, a youth may be referred to recreational activities, vocational/educational training, individual or group

counselling, family services, and/or substance abuse interventions (Campbell & Retzlaff, 2000; Hillian, Reitsma-Street, & Hackler, 2004).

Variations in diversion implementation are due to unique jurisdictional needs, and resources within the specific criminal justice system and the population it serves (Haines, Lane, McGuire, Perkins, & Whittington, 2015; Lattimore, Broner, Sherman, Frisman, & Shafer, 2003; Whittington et al., 2015). When considering justice-involved youth, diversion interventions are expected to take into account the treatment needs of the offender within his/her developmental context, including level of cognitive and moral development, relationship skills, family and peer connections, maturity level, and even physical development and health needs (Cuellar et al., 2006; Sullivan et al., 2007). Diversion programming is typically offered to both male and female youth but due to males committing more offences than females (e.g., Jones, Brown, Wanamaker, & Greiner, 2014; Powell, Perreira, & Harris, 2010; Stephenson, Woodhams, & Cooke, 2014; Vaillancourt, 2010) a gender difference also emerges within diversion program demographics (e.g., Schwalbe, Gearing, MacKenzie, Brewer, & Ibrahim, 2012; Wilson & Hoge, 2013b).

For pre-arrest diversion, the focus is mainly on community-based treatment and addressing individual needs, whereas post-arrest diversion programs offer alternatives to detention and incarceration and aim to minimize future involvement with criminal activities and subsequent arrests. Post-sentence diversion programs have a different focus in that they aim to prevent recidivism by individuals who have already been processed through the traditional criminal justice system, instead of the typical aim of avoiding contact with the criminal justice system altogether (Fiduccia &

Rogers, 2012). For example, these programs may target those who are trying to re-integrate into society and maintain prosocial behaviours by assigning them to specific programs for their needs. Alternatively, these post-sentence diversion programs may target individuals who are on the verge of breaching a probation order, and instead of filing a breach, the probation officer may refer the individual to community-based programming (Fiduccia & Rogers, 2012). Differences in entry point may alter the effect of the diversion process – with an earlier point of entry having the greatest influence on reducing recidivism rates (Gavazzi, Wasserman, Partridge, & Sheridan, 2000; Joudo, 2008).

It is essential that judges and other criminal justice personnel endorse the diversion process and refer appropriate cases to such programs. Research has demonstrated that the more familiar these professionals are with the diversion processes and resulting positive outcomes, the more willing they are to continue supporting the diversion program (Sullivan et al., 2007). Other important elements to the process of diversion are the police departments and their respective policies, as police officers are most often the first point of contact with youth and they can provide immediate referrals. Research has identified multiple factors that can influence the decision to divert which may or may not be present at the time of the offence, including offence severity, age of the youth, race, socioeconomic status, gender, history of prior contact with police or the criminal justice system, presence of a weapon, value of property damage, level of adult supervision in the youth's life, disrespectful demeanour towards the officer(s), level of social isolation and even the youth's conformity in his/her appearance (Greene, 2011; Kraus & Hasleton, 1982;



Visher, 1983). A minority of police officers in an Ontario survey identified the needs of youth as a factor in their decision to divert youth, in addition to those listed above (Marinos & Innocente, 2008). Furthermore, police department policies influence officer decisions, as does the officer's rank within the organization, the level of police training on diversion and youth development, the geographic location of the offence (e.g., urban vs. rural), the attitude of the victim, the situational evidence, and any witness testimony (Greene, 2011; Kraus & Hasleton, 1982; Marinos & Innocente, 2008; Meyer & Reppucci, 2007; Stewart & Smith, 2004).

The factors that effect the decisions of police officers are not unlike those factors that have been reported to influence the actions toward clients by other youth caseworkers (i.e., social workers, probation officers). For example, departmental policies are reported to influence the decision to screen and refer some at-risk youth for further assessment. More specifically, youth workers who perceived risk screening as consistent with their organizational mandate and those who hold individual confidence in their ability to screen and refer youth to appropriate services would do so more often than a worker who lacked that confidence and did not endorse risk screening as part of his or her role (Knowles, Townsend, & Anderson, 2012). Additionally, the demographic variables of gender and age were reported to weigh heavily in the decision making process when probation officers were choosing how to intervene with their clients (Umamaheswar, 2013). For example, older individuals were considered to be more "hardened" in their criminal ways and probation officers did not hold as much hope for these individuals to change. Additionally, females were noted to be less preferable clients as they were viewed as more difficult cases, likely

with past trauma, and requiring more time to talk about emotions (Umamaheswar, 2013). These instances of youth care workers highlighting the negative aspects of some youth could influence their interactions and working relationship with youth clients, resulting in fewer services or poorer quality of service delivery, similar to police decisions in deciding to arrest a youth rather than refer to diversion services.

*Theories underlying diversion practices.*

As stated by Izzo and Ross (1990), intervention programs based on a solid theoretical foundation (e.g., cognitive theory; social learning theory) are five times more effective at reducing recidivism than atheoretical programs (i.e., services providers develop their own intervention plan without reference to empirical evidence). Initially, there were two sociological views that formed the theoretical backbone of diversion programs: labeling theory and differential association theory. Labeling theory, as applied to offenders, argues that simply having contact with the criminal justice system increases the risk of future reoffending (Cocozza et al., 2005). Under this theory, contact with the criminal justice system itself is viewed as a stigmatizing experience that leads society to place a label of “offender” on the individual, regardless of the judicial outcome. After receiving that label, the individual then experiences negative societal messages about offenders. Repeated exposure to these negative messages is argued to lead to an internalization of an antisocial self-image that, consequently, creates an expectation of continued antisocial behaviour consistent with that self-image. Committing antisocial behaviours then limits access to conventional social roles and opportunities in the future, theoretically perpetuating the cycle (Lemert, 1951; 1967). When it was initially developed, diversion aimed to have

the individual spared the “offender” label to avoid the internalization of negative connotations and expectations of this label that could promote future criminal behaviour.

Some research evidence exists supporting an inverse relationship between the presence of a negative self-concept and a greater engagement in antisocial behaviour in adolescents (e.g., Smith, Wolf, Cantillon, Thomas, & Davidson, 2004; Wilson et al., 2009; Wilson & Hoge, 2013b). However, researchers have acknowledged that it is not possible to determine specifically whether the contact with the criminal justice system is what caused the negative self-concept to develop (Wilson et al., 2009).

Differential association theory (Cressey, 1952; Sutherland, 1974) focuses on the individual’s level of exposure to criminal norms and the degree to which those norms are internalized relative to prosocial norms. Specifically, if an individual associates with others who exhibit antisocial behaviours and attitudes, then the individual experiences social pressure to assimilate and adopt these same attitudes and behaviours, particularly if they are similar age peers. Within this socialization context, social approval is gained through engaging in antisocial behaviours and minimizing prosocial behaviours. Over time, this results in an antisocial orientation being internalized and valued by the individual. Diversion programs aim to counteract the negative impact of antisocial peer associations by intervening and removing the youth from the traditional criminal justice system where close interactions with peers who hold strong antisocial attitudes are more frequent than in the general community (Wilson & Hoge, 2013b). There is substantial research supporting for this theory as

the presence of antisocial peer associations has been consistently related to higher rates of recidivism and antisocial behaviours (see Andrews & Bonta, 2010a).

More recently, a third theory has been used to inform the use of diversionary practices. The Risk-Need-Responsivity model (RNR) of effective correctional assessment and case management was first introduced by Andrews, Bonta, and Hoge in 1990 after they examined the content of offender rehabilitation programs that demonstrated effectiveness at reducing recidivism. This model has also been applied to crime prevention (e.g., Andrews & Dowden, 2007; Campbell & Goggin, 2011). The RNR model is based heavily on general personality and cognitive social learning psychological theories and consists of 15 principles (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a). The RNR model is currently the only empirically validated set of principles for intervening with justice-involved individuals that aims for offenders to exit the criminal justice system and prevent future criminality (Polaschek, 2012).

Out of the 15 principles, there are three “core” RNR principles used for risk classification purposes to ensure effective correctional case management and rehabilitation. The first core principle, the Risk Principle, dictates that a reliable assessment of an individual’s risk factors for criminal behaviour (e.g., personal characteristics and circumstances), through the use of a standardized risk assessment tool, is essential to effective case management and rehabilitation success.

Additionally, intervention services and supervision are to be provided at a level of intensity that corresponds with the individual’s identified risk level. For example, research has demonstrated that high-risk offenders respond better to more intensive services (i.e., those that require more time and greater engagement with program

content), whereas low-risk offenders do well with minimal or no intervention (e.g., Andrews, Bonta, et al., 1990; Andrews & Bonta, 2003, 2010a; Andrews & Dowden, 2006; Andrews, Zinger, et al., 1990; Bonta, 1997; Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Holsinger, 2006). Thus, the Risk Principle identifies “who” is to be targeted for intervention and at what intensity.

The second core principle, the Need Principle, pinpoints the areas within an offender’s circumstances that elevate the risk of future criminal behaviour (i.e., the “what” that should be targeted for intervention). The Need Principle highlights the difference between *criminogenic needs*, dynamic factors that research has identified as being empirically linked to criminal behaviour and recidivism (e.g., a history of antisocial behaviour, antisocial personality traits, procriminal attitudes, family instability, difficulties in school or employment, an absence of productive/structured leisure activities, criminal peers/lack of prosocial peers, and the presence of substance use), and *noncriminogenic needs*, which are areas of an individual’s life that are also dynamic but which have weak associations to criminal recidivism (e.g., serious mental illness, self-esteem, lack of ambition, history of victimization, and lack of physical activity). It is the criminogenic needs that characterize an offender’s criminal risk level and contribute to a higher or lower risk for future criminal behaviour. The RNR model argues that, to conduct effective offender rehabilitation, it is these dynamic criminogenic needs that are to be the central targets of intervention programs and not the noncriminogenic needs. Research has demonstrated that addressing criminogenic needs in treatment is associated with reduction in recidivism risk (e.g., Andrews, Bonta, et al., 1990; Andrews & Bonta, 2003, 2010a; Taxman & Thanner, 2006; Vieira

et al., 2009). Noncriminogenic needs may be targeted in treatment to increase offender engagement with the intervention, but should not comprise the sole focus of the intervention if the goal is to reduce recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a). The RNR model takes a gender-neutral approach to criminogenic needs by stating that these eight core need areas apply equally well to both males and females. This view has been generally supported in the research literature, though there have been some differences found in the magnitude of need area association between the genders (e.g., personality and history of maltreatment more prevalent in girls; influence of peers stronger with boys; Funk, 1999; Gavazzi, Yarcheck, & Chesney-Lind, 2006; Olver, Stockdale, & Wong, 2012; Rettinger & Andrews, 2010; Van Voorhis, Wright, Salisbury, & Bauman, 2010; Vitopolous, Peterson-Badali, & Skilling, 2012). Thus, an individual's criminogenic needs should serve as treatment goals, and the dynamic nature of these needs allows for constant measurement of progression made in each need area (Andrews & Dowden, 2007). As identified by Lipsey (1995), correctional intervention services are most effective when multiple criminogenic need areas are addressed during rehabilitation programs.

Given that rehabilitation can be influenced by an individual's capacity for learning new skill(s) or behaviours and willingness to learn these new skills, these factors need to be considered in case planning (Vieira et al., 2009). Thus, the third core RNR principle is the Responsivity Principle, which speaks to "how" interventions should be provided to individuals. There are two subcomponents of responsivity: general and specific. Adhering to the general responsivity principle requires a program to use evidence-based treatment approaches to address

criminogenic needs. The most efficacious treatments for a wide range of problem behaviours are based in cognitive-behavioural and social learning strategies (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a; Tarolla et al., 2002). Techniques employed in such evidence-based programs include modeling, reinforcement, role-playing, skill building, cognitive restructuring of thoughts and emotions, and repeated practicing of new, low-risk alternative behaviours in high-risk situations (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a). The specific responsivity principle states that interventions need to be tailored to an individual's cognitive and personality style and may include building upon existing strengths and protective factors (e.g., emotional maturity, access to a supportive adult mentor). Individual characteristics, including intelligence, anxiety, interpersonal sensitivity and cognitive maturity, also will influence the appropriateness of a specific evidence-based treatment approach for each individual offender. Although these characteristics may not have direct associations with criminal behaviour or recidivism (Bonta, 1995), the identification and consideration of these characteristics during case planning allows for intervention programs to be better matched to the offender, resulting in a greater effect on lowering recidivism risk (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a). Regardless of which type of evidence-based intervention is provided and how it is tailored to an individual's specific responsivity needs, it still remains that the criminogenic needs should be the primary targets for rehabilitation.

The remaining principles within the RNR model are divided into clinical and organizational components. The clinical principles reflect the necessity to target multiple criminogenic needs (*breadth*); to deliver services from a human service model; to use fair, assertive, and respectful interaction styles to model prosocial

behaviours; to incorporate the individual's strengths into treatment; to use valid measures of assessment, as opposed to clinical judgment; to assess risk and treatment progress; and to ensure that any use of professional discretion (e.g., increasing an individual's risk level above that of a structured assessment rates it as) is thoroughly documented. The organizational principles articulate the need for strong management and policy support for RNR programming. Staff and interventionists who are expected to adhere to the principles of RNR cannot do so without the full support of their respective organizations, as well as from other agencies that contribute to the rehabilitation of justice-involved individuals (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a). For example, these organizational principles state that staff must have high-quality relationship and structuring skills to conduct effective practice with their clients. Additionally, agency management must promote the selection, training, and supervision of staff to ensure the implementation integrity of the RNR model remains high. The organizational principles also note that community-based programs are preferred over institutional or residential settings.

As a whole, the RNR model was designed to enhance the pursuit of recidivism reduction through ethical, legal, efficient, and humane pathways (Andrews & Dowden, 2007). Interventions that adhere to the RNR model lead to reductions in recidivism rates ranging from 10-50% (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a; Bonta, 1997). Such interventions have demonstrated effectiveness for male and females, for youth and minority offenders, and in community as well as custodial settings (Andrews & Bonta, 2006, 2010b; Andrews, Zinger, et al., 1990; Dowden & Andrews, 1999; Vieira et al., 2009). Programs adhering to the RNR model have also demonstrated effectiveness in



reducing substance abuse behaviour, as well as a variety of criminal activities, including violent, nonviolent, gang and sexual offences, and misconducts while in custody (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a, 2010b; Bonta, Bogue, Crowley, & Motiuk, 2001; Bourgon, Bonta, Ruge, Scott, & Yessine, 2010; Di Placido, Simon, Witte, Gu, & Wong, 2006; Dowden & Andrews, 2004; French & Gendreau, 2006; Hanson, Bourgon, Helmus & Hodgson, 2009; Taxman & Thanner, 2006; Wormith et al., 2007). These results have been replicated in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a).

In order to understand more fully the effectiveness of programs that adhere to the RNR model, Andrews and Bonta (2010b) have made comparisons between the effect sizes of highly adherent RNR programs on recidivism reduction and the effect sizes of other widely accepted and endorsed medical and psychological treatments. Results indicated that the RNR interventions had larger effect sizes for reducing recidivism than going through chemotherapy did to decrease breast cancer, attending psychological counselling for coping methods did to decrease panic disorder symptoms, and attending general psychotherapy for youth with depression did to decrease depressive symptoms. Although the populations and outcome variables are different, the authors highlighted that the overall treatment effects of adhering to the RNR model were larger and more positive than other widely endorsed treatment protocols. The cumulative evidence for the effectiveness of the RNR model in recidivism reduction interventions in comparison with other widely accepted treatments has led to it becoming one of the premier models of offender rehabilitation (Bourgon et al., 2010).

One caveat to the effectiveness of the RNR model is that all three core principles must be followed in order to maximize recidivism reduction. As demonstrated by Dowden and Andrews (2004), adherence to the RNR principles and the human service principles on which it is based resulted in lower rates of recidivism for violent offenders. Similarly, programs that focus on higher risk individuals have the highest returns on investment, consistent with the Risk principle (Lipsey, 2009). Research has also demonstrated that non-adherence to the RNR model is associated with either null effects, or with increased recidivism rates (Andrews & Dowden, 2007). Adherence to the RNR model in real world settings is more difficult and smaller effect sizes are more commonly seen in field data, similar to what is typically found with other intervention options (e.g., Campbell, Dyck, & Wershler, 2014; Polaschek, 2012; Shook & Saari, 2007; Vincent, Pavia-Salisbury, Cook, Guy, & Perrault, 2012). However, even in field research, greater RNR adherence results in better outcomes (Bourgon et al., 2010; Wilson & Hoge, 2013a).

Overall, modern versions of diversion place less emphasis on labeling theory and its concern over the potential for negative stigmatization of justice-involved youth. Instead, these contemporary approaches focus on the benefits of addressing the criminogenic need areas of these youth and recognizing the need to increase prosocial peer influences (Schwalbe et al., 2012). When adhering to the RNR model, diversion is a method through which justice-involved youth can be handled with the least amount of intervention required to address their criminogenic needs and with the least amount of direct criminal justice system involvement needed to positively impact on crime prevention (Lo et al., 2006).

***Developing a diversion program.***

The first step for implementing a diversion program is for the target jurisdiction to identify the areas of difficulty for youth within their specific community, the nature of available resources to address these difficulties, and the areas within their justice systems that are negatively impacting on youth. Sullivan et al. (2007) noted that a “one size fits all” approach to developing diversion programs is not recommended because each community population has unique needs and will require different community services to which to divert their youth. Once these issues have been identified, it is recommended that support for the process be developed with all stakeholders and potential participants, including those working in the criminal justice system, in community-based services, as well as members of the general community. Confidence in the forthcoming diversion process is required in order for it to succeed. This confidence emerges from the use of an organized and evidence-based approach: using standardized assessment processes, assembling a directory of community resources, ensuring open communication between services and agencies, encouraging the continued use of resources by youth after the completion of diversion requirements, and systematic tracking of youth progress throughout the process for future evaluations (Cocozza et al., 2005; Hodges et al., 2011). Additionally, using an integrated, holistic and family-centred approach is recommended when diverting youth from the criminal justice system (Baldwin, Christian, Berkeljon, Shadish, & Bean, 2012; Cocozza et al., 2005).

Adult diversion programs tend to target specific problem areas for clients (e.g., mental health issues, substance abuse, sexual offences) and this approach has

continued for youth (e.g., Butler, Goodman-Delahunty, & Lulham, 2012; Colwell et al., 2012; Joudo, 2008; Fiduccia & Rogers, 2012; King, Holmes, Henderson, & Latessa, 2001; Lattimore et al., 2003; Reilly, Scantleton, & Didcott, 2002). Diversion away from the criminal justice system is important for those youth with mental health and addictions issues, but they are not the only individuals for whom traditional criminal justice responses are poorly suited. Low risk to reoffend youth are noted to benefit from limited contact with the criminal justice system and they can be adequately managed with little to no intervention or legal responses, in accordance with the RNR model. Some programs find that targeting Medium to High risk youth with diversion programs is also successful, lending to the importance of defining the program's ultimate goals and structure to best suit the population to whom it is providing services (Lowenkamp, Makarios, Latessa, Lemke, & Smith, 2010; Wilson & Hoge, 2013a). When developing a diversion program for youth of higher risk status, there should be a corresponding increase in diversion intervention intensity, consistent with the RNR model (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a).

The flexible definition of diversion has resulted in significant variations with regard to how diversion programs are implemented, both within and between countries, given the systematic individualization across jurisdictions that has taken place for the unique problems facing the districts (i.e., subsets of jurisdictions), as well as the services available to address those issues (McInerney et al., 2013). This customization of diversion programs has made it difficult to compare diversion to traditional criminal justice processes on a global scale, and has limited general inferences about the effectiveness and impact of diversion on its participants (Binder

& Geis, 1984; Broner et al., 2004; Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2009; Schwalbe et al., 2012). As a result, the available research literature on diversion programs is largely descriptive and focuses on the process and policies governing these programs and who is admitted to them, rather than analyses of objective outcomes (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2009).

Despite inconsistencies in diversion frameworks, cost effectiveness has been identified as a tentative strength of these programs. In a recent comparison of interventions for justice-involved youth conducted by Welsh and colleagues (2012), an adolescent diversion program in the United States was reported to save \$10.13 for every \$1.00 invested, making it one of the most cost effective intervention programs after functional family therapy, education provision programs (within institutions and communities), targeted drug treatment in communities, and aggression replacement training. In a series of publications, a Floridian diversion program demonstrated initial cost increases to key justice services (e.g., probation, court) 6-months after implementation (Dembo, Wareham, Chirikos, & Schmeidler, 2005; Dembo, Wareham, & Schmeidler, 2005; Dembo, Wareham, Schmeidler, & Chirikos, 2005). However, the direct cost to Florida's criminal justice system was lower at the 12-month follow-up point compared with the cost from other programs that serviced justice-involved youth (e.g., close monitoring, arbitration). Additional cost effectiveness support for diversion programs comes from the United Kingdom's Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health diversion program, in which diversion from short-term prison sentences resulted in more than £20,000 per diverted person, with approximately £8,000 of savings within the criminal justice system and approximately

£16,000 in savings from lower rates of reoffending and subsequent associated costs (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2009). Notably, it took two years before the diversion program demonstrated significant cost savings, but diversion was deemed to be “cost neutral” after the first year as there were decreased costs to the criminal justice system (i.e., prisons) and increased costs to the mental health services (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2009). The presence of a post-arrest diversion option within the criminal justice system allows some youth to be released much earlier, thereby decreasing the cost to the prison system. Generally, cost savings vary by the jurisdiction within which the diversion program runs but have been estimated to range between \$7,500-\$22,000 per youth (Fischer & Jeune, 1987; Hodges et al., 2011).

In addition to cost saving, diversion programs may speed up the process of the traditional court system given that diverting and successfully intervening with an individual can result in fewer rearrests, less use of remand services, fewer court hearings and delays, as well as fewer individuals in prison (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2009). Diversion programs have reported reductions in recidivism rates ranging between 43-48% lower than control groups processed through the traditional criminal justice system, and between 19-22% lower than other community-based program participants (Hodges et al., 2011). Specific to mental health diversion, those who receive intervention for their mental health issues tend to become less likely to reoffend when processed through pre-trial diversion (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2009). Diversion programs that involve therapeutic interventions (i.e., promote enhancement of strengths, provide support, and offer constructive, behaviour

change skills) generally have positive effects illustrated by lower rates of recidivism in both youth and adults, with 10-40% reductions in recidivism rates being reported (Welsh et al., 2012).

Importantly, although many diversion studies have shown small to moderate decreases in recidivism compared with court-processed youth, few studies have shown a null result or an increase in recidivism (Greene, 2011). Furthermore, there has been no evidence to date that there is an increased risk to public safety when some offenders are diverted away from the traditional criminal justice system and treated in the community (DeMatteo et al., 2013; Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2009). However, there are some studies that show no significant improvements in behaviour (e.g., Broner et al., 2004; Cueller et al., 2006), indicating that diversion from traditional court processes does not guarantee individual behaviour changes and that the type of intervention provided does play a role.

When examining behaviour during the diversion process, youth who are diverted to community treatment and specialized supervision post-sentencing have demonstrated more contact with probation officers and increased engagement with case plan problem solving, higher levels of referrals to community resources, and improvements in life satisfaction and global functioning compared to youth who were processed through the traditional court system (Colwell et al., 2012). Fischer and Jeune (1987) noted that youth who had experienced both the traditional court system and diversion reported a preference for diversion over court as they felt they were treated fairly throughout the process and were more willing to accept responsibility for their actions.

With respect to psychosocial functioning, diverting youth to community-based treatment has been argued to allow for a more holistic approach to addressing multiple areas of youth needs (Sullivan et al., 2007), consistent with the RNR model. Treating youth in the community allows for service providers to focus their interventions on identifying individual, family, and community areas of strength and weakness and address these factors simultaneously (Sullivan et al., 2007). Community-based programs can also provide better outcomes at a lower cost than programs provided within the criminal justice system (e.g., Dembo, Wareham, Schmeidler, & Chirikos, 2005). Youth who have participated in diversion programs report better overall life functioning, specifically within their home and school environments. Caregivers also report improved overall psychosocial functioning in peer interactions in addition to home and school improvements (Broner et al., 2004; Colwell et al., 2012; Hodges et al., 2011).

Diversion programs tend to have high completion rates, with reports ranging from 77%-90% (e.g., Campbell & Retzlaff, 2000; Dembo, Walters, & Meyers, 2005). It appears that program completion is a key component in the short-term effectiveness of the diversion process (i.e., six to 12 months), as diversion non-completers have reoffended at more frequently than those who were processed through the traditional criminal justice system, despite being demographically similar to program completers (Wilson & Hoge, 2013b). Similarly, Fiduccia and Rogers (2012) reported that adult offenders with mental health issues who completed their diversion program had a 9.5% recidivism rate, whereas 24.3% of diversion non-completers reoffended within



the same 12 month follow up period. At 24 months, diversion program completers maintained a lower re-arrest rate (18.2%) compared to non-completers (46.7%).

Much of the variance in diversion program outcomes across studies has been accounted for by index offence severity, offending history, and client characteristics more so than the presence or absence of any specific individual intervention (e.g., recreation, victim-offender mediation, substance abuse treatment; Campbell & Retzlaff, 2000; King et al., 2001; McAra & McVie, 2007; Sullivan et al., 2007). This finding highlights the relevance of the RNR philosophy to diversion by demonstrating the importance of tailoring treatment and supervision to specific offender profiles (Campbell & Retzlaff, 2000). Thus, practitioners within diversion programs are strongly urged to consider client characteristics and tailor their referrals and interventions to these characteristics, consistent with the Responsivity principle (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a; Campbell & Retzlaff, 2000).

***Meta-analyses on diversion effectiveness.***

In an attempt to clarify the research literature on diversion and to compare results across studies, there have been two key meta-analyses conducted on diversion programs. The first, by Schwalbe and colleagues (2012), examined 28 experimental studies conducted between 1980 and 2011 on diversion programs with justice-involved youth. Among these studies, recidivism was the most common outcome reported. There was no significant effect of diversion on recidivism rates when experimental and control groups were compared; both groups had similar average recidivism rates of 31.4% and 36.3%, respectively. Furthermore, the authors suggested that the effects of diversion programs were as likely to be highly positive as

they were to be highly negative; they reported a range of odds ratios of 0.43 to 1.58 with respect to the impact of diversion on recidivism risk. These outcome effect sizes were not moderated by research design characteristics (e.g., random assignment, length of follow up sample size), sample demographics (age, gender, and race), eligibility criteria, or treatment quality indicators (e.g., manualized, researcher involvement, treatment fidelity). Closer examination of five types of diversion programs (case management, individual treatment, family treatment, youth court, restorative justice) revealed that only the family treatment model of diversion resulted in a significant decrease in recidivism rates. These authors noted that other outcome measures, including frequency of reoffending, truancy, and psychosocial difficulties, were inconsistently reported and, therefore, could not be included in their meta-analysis.

Wilson and Hoge (2013b) also conducted a meta-analysis of 73 diversion programs that were reported in 45 evaluation studies completed between 1972 and 2010. These authors coded study descriptors (e.g., research design, country of origin), sample descriptors (e.g., age, race), and program descriptor variables (e.g., referral source, hours of intervention). Additionally, the quality of the study design was coded as either successful (e.g., well executed random assignment design), somewhat successful (e.g., matched designed with no verification of group equivalence or a convenience sample controlling for demographic and risk-related variables during analyses), or non-successful (e.g., little attempt to control clear between-group differences). The intake risk level of the youth was coded when it was reported, as was adherence to the RNR model within the diversion programs' approaches to

handling justice-involved youth. Within the sample of studies, there were 13 police caution programs and 60 diversion intervention programs. The diversion opportunities provided to youth included community service, restitution, restorative justice, and justice conferences. A wide range of intervention hours delivered by these programs was observed, spanning as little as 0.33 hours up to 42 hours of service contact, with a median intervention time of 1.22 hours. A large number of treatment programs were delivered by community agencies, which compromised these authors' ability to adequately assess the nature of the treatment or integrity of service delivery due to the unavailability of information on the content of services provided. Unlike Schwalbe and colleagues (2012), Wilson and Hoge (2013b) found a significantly lower unweighted average recidivism rate among the aggregate sample of diverted youth (31.5%) than among the traditional court processed youth (41.3%). This pattern was true for 60 of the 73 reviewed programs, and both intervention and caution programs were reported to be more effective than traditional court processing. Interestingly, Wilson and Hoge (2013b) found that the quality of the study design was significantly related to these differences in recidivism, with those studies coded as "successful" producing a less robust diversion effect than studies that were coded as "somewhat successful" or "non-successful". However, the "successful" studies represented a variety of diversion programs (i.e., had either an intervention or caution approach, targeted different youth populations, provided different intervention programs) and thus, it is difficult to draw a more general conclusion on the effectiveness of diversion programs compared to the traditional court process from this result.

In addition, Wilson and Hoge (2013b) found that evaluation studies that were conducted by individuals from within the diversion agency tended to find larger recidivism reductions compared to traditional processing than when the studies were conducted by independent researchers (i.e., creating a potential allegiance effect). Moreover, programs that were run by community agencies, non-criminal justice public agencies, or independent researchers were found to produce smaller recidivism reduction rates than those that had criminal justice professionals involved in the program activities. Differences between diversion and traditional court processes in rates of recidivism were not attributed to youth gender or age.

Consistent with the Risk Principle of the RNR model, Wilson and Hoge (2013b) found that caution programs (i.e., providing verbal warnings) had lower rates of reoffending in Low risk youth compared to when this group was provided with some form of intervention. With respect to risk level and the timing of diversion, these researchers found that programs that diverted Low risk youth pre-charge showed lower rates of recidivism than those who were referred post-charge; no effect was identified on the timing of referral for Medium or High risk youth. Thus, Low risk youth may be best managed with only a warning. Wilson and Hoge (2013b) noted that the reviewed studies in their analysis did not adequately address or report matching of diversion interventions to the identified criminogenic needs of each youth. These studies also did not commonly report the individual risk level of the youth at intake, or even identify the targeted risk level range for the diversion program. This lack of documentation limited the depth and results of their meta-analysis.

Overall, Wilson and Hoge (2013b) concluded that diversion programs are significantly more effective than the traditional court system at reducing youth reoffending rates. However, these researchers also concluded that study design and program allegiance effects impacted the result of diversion effectiveness, with more rigorous studies (i.e., random sampling, experimental design, outside researcher) resulting in smaller effect sizes for diversion. Additionally, the time at which diversion occurred was found to be important for Low risk youth, with pre-arrest diversion demonstrating lower recidivism rates, but it did not appear to be as important for Medium or High risk youth.

Taken together, the results of the meta-analyses reviewed appear to be conflicting. Schwalbe and colleagues (2012) did not find significant differences between diversion and traditional court processing, whereas Wilson and Hoge (2013b) did. The variation between these studies may likely be attributed to methodological differences between them. For example, Schwalbe et al. (2012) compared the specific forms of intervention diversion programs to each other (e.g., family treatment) and Wilson and Hoge (2013b) compared caution-only diversion programs with intervention diversion programs. Given that caution-only programs and other approaches for handling justice-involved youth (e.g., restorative justice) are forms of diversion, comparing them to diversion programs that provide intervention services may actually be a false comparison that limits the test of the true effect of diversion programs to be missed (Wilson & Hoge, 2013b). Additionally, as mentioned by Wilson and Hoge (2013a), “the relationship between diversion and recidivism is complex” (p.16). These authors referenced the variability in diversion programs, as

well as in the program evaluations, and stated that there were not enough studies to date that employed strong research designs to evaluate critical features of diversion, such as those that would allow the process to be more effective under all circumstances (e.g., target population characteristics, matching criminogenic needs with specific interventions).

***Limitations in diversion research.***

In addition to the limitations within the diversion literature noted by Wilson and Hoge (2013a), Hartford, Carey, and Mendonca (2007) identified some substantive limitations with diversion research, including lack of control groups, limited longitudinal designs, and few objective variables that allow for comparison across studies. These authors suggested that future research needs to examine the best indicators for inclusion in diversion programs, identify standard benchmarks for assessing progress through the diversion process, as well as develop consistent and objective outcome measures that can be used across studies to increase comparability of program evaluations.

Beyond the research-related limitations raised by Hartford and colleagues (2007), other criticisms target the orientation and implementation of the diversion programs themselves. One of the most widely raised criticisms against diversion is the risk of “widening the net”. There is the potential for the implementation of a diversion program to extend its reach to young people who would have previously avoided the criminal justice system entirely (e.g., no arrest and/or would have only received a verbal warning; Bécharde et al., 2011; Binder & Geis, 1984; Joudo, 2008). Essentially, diversion may impose an additional level of social control on people who would not

have experienced it otherwise, under a previous non-diversion environment. Under some diversion policies, even very minor offences and transgressions are documented and this creates a formal paper trail for involvement with the criminal justice system; this occurs despite that fact that the paper trail is for the purposes of diversion away from the criminal justice system. Béchard and colleagues (2011) noted evidence of net widening in a diversion program in Florida, which included youth who had committed minor antisocial behaviours (e.g., petty theft, trespassing, disorderly conduct, mischief). Inclusion of such minor offences into a diversion program leads to the illusion of an effective program, as 98% did not recidivate. In alignment with the RNR model and trajectories of youth antisocial behaviour, most of these youth likely were not going to reoffend anyway as a result of being Low risk (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a; Béchard et al., 2011; Piquero et al., 2012). This is an important consideration because diversion programs are typically focused on first-time offending youth. The net widening process that occurs within some diversion programs may actually do more for sustaining the programs' clientele (Béchard et al., 2011), than it does for concentrating on at-risk youth.

There are multiple arguments disputing the net widening criticism of diversion, including the notion that most programs are voluntary and youth can refuse to participate if they prefer. Furthermore, some diversion programs have the stipulation that to be eligible for the process there must be sufficient evidence to prosecute a youth, which would limit program access to only those who would otherwise have been processed through the court system (Fischer & Jeune, 1987). Moreover, social control has been described as a regular aspect of everyday life with

social norms and legal definitions outlining unacceptable/antisocial behaviour as well as appropriate responses to this behaviour (Greene, 2011). Specifically, Greene (2011) argued that diversion does not impose more control on the lives of justice-involved youth because that social control already penetrates daily life. To minimize the potential net widening effect of diversion programs and address this prevalent criticism, Greene (2011) suggested that more detailed legislation is needed to outline who is eligible for diversion from the criminal justice system and what explicit limitations are placed on officer discretion.

In addition to the net-widening critique of diversion programs, there is concern over “mesh-thinning”; that is, diverting youth into programs that are more intensive and which require more compliant behaviour than would be expected in a traditional sanction or in a traditional criminal justice program (Joudo, 2008). For example, some diversion programs in Australia were noted to include requirements for a clean urinalysis, adherence to curfews, and/or wearing electronic monitoring devices to remain in the diversion program. Notably, all of these requirements would likely not have been obligatory had the individual simply been processed through the traditional court system and received a probation sentence and compliance conditions (Joudo, 2008). Proponents of the diversion process again point to the voluntariness of the diversion program and note that all participants would be fully informed of all requirements before agreeing to start the process (Fischer & Jeune, 1987).

Opponents of diversion programs also refer to one of the process’s own underlying theories (i.e., labeling theory) as a main critique of this approach. Specifically, labeling theory states that individuals are harmed when they internalize



negative messages about themselves that have been placed upon them by other people or agencies. Critics of diversion endorse the notion that the primary cause of reoffending is the stigmatization that takes place due to this contact, especially for those who otherwise would not have reoffended. Although diverted youth are kept away from the traditional processes within the criminal justice system, they are still labelled as “deviant” in some manner by meeting criteria for participation in diversion. These critics state that “true diversion” would be releasing youth without any services from the criminal justice system at all (Binder & Geis, 1984; Dembo, Wareham, Schmeidler, & Chirikos, 2005; Whitehead & Lab, 1989).

Researchers have recommended that addressing the notion of being labeled (e.g., deviant, offender, antisocial) in intervention or treatment sessions and programs may minimize the internalization of the negative connotations that may arise through diversion, and may just as likely re-establish the youth’s positive self-concept as it would harm it. Diversionary processes attempt to minimize the potential for negative stigmatization by focusing the primary goal on addressing risk factors and not shaming the youth for their actions (Campbell & Retzlaff, 2000; Joudo, 2008). Dembo, Wareham, Chirikos and Schmeidler (2005) have noted that keeping the community services associated with diversion clearly distinct from the criminal justice system (i.e., not run by the police department or court system) should be sufficient to reduce potential labeling of diverted youth as antisocial.

Opponents of diversion have also challenged its cost effectiveness, despite some promising studies on this issue. Specifically, critics have argued that, since some diversion programs are diverting low-risk youth into intervention programs (going

against the RNR model), there is actually an increased cost to society to operate these additional programs. Given that these youth typically would be cautioned or warned without any further contact with the justice system under a non-diversion policy, diverting them into interventions increases the use of resources and, subsequently, the cost to society (Greene, 2011). Furthermore, there is evidence from RNR research that over-intervening with low-risk individuals is related to higher recidivism rates, (e.g., Andrews & Dowden, 2007, Schmidt, Hoge, & Gomes, 2005), which would subsequently increase costs.

***Implementation suggestions and cautions for diversion programs.***

There have been a number of cautions for the process of diversion put forward by researchers in addition to the previously reviewed criticisms. First and foremost, it is important to remember that although diversion can be a pathway away from the criminal justice system, it is not necessarily a pathway toward intervention if the resources and motivation to participate are not available (Broner et al., 2004). One must consider the goals and resources available when starting a diversion process to determine whether simple diversion away from the traditional court process would be suitable for the needs of the criminal justice system, the community, and the justice-involved youth. The purpose of diversion is not to collect more youth into formal processes, but, rather, to identify and address the criminogenic needs of youth offenders and keep them outside of the criminal justice system. Therefore, program developers need to consider whether the target population is appropriate for the services available and the needs of the criminal justice system.

Secondly, attention must be paid to the level of coercion that can arise in the diversion process (e.g., the requirement to admit guilt or face going through traditional court proceedings can be a strong factor in influencing consent decisions; Fiduccia & Rogers, 2012; Joudo, 2008; Maclure et al., 2003). Specifically, when dealing with a vulnerable population, such as youth, it is important to explain thoroughly the entire process and all alternative options in order for the participant to be informed fully about the choices regarding their involvement in the diversion program or the criminal justice system (Fiduccia & Rogers, 2012).

The third caution to consider before starting a diversion program relates to the involvement of community agencies. It is important to acknowledge that implementing a diversion program does not automatically create services or resources within the community. Starting a diversion process without consulting, compensating, or preparing integral community service providers for an influx of clients may result in the service providers becoming overwhelmed, and create long waiting lists for both diverted individuals and community members in need of assistance (Broner et al., 2004; Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2009). Furthermore, simply having the community services available does not mean that those services are actually accessible to the youth, or are evidence-based. Additionally, diversion requirements should not impose an excessive burden on youths and their families (e.g., time commitment, transportation to receive services; Coccozza et al., 2005).

### **The Present Dissertation**

Taken together, there are many limitations, cautions, and theoretical discussions regarding diversion programs in the research literature, but what is

currently missing is an in-depth examination of the effect that diversion interventions are having on justice-involved youth and the surrounding community. Most, if not all, diversion programs refer to recidivism rates as the best indication of diversion successes. Although an important and relatively accessible way to measure diversion program effect, the sole focus on recidivism misses the potential nuanced influence of diversion on its program participants and provides no information as to why it has the impact it does. Specifically, sole focus on recidivism ignores whether a youth's risk level decreased (i.e., harm reduction), does not identify which areas of their lives have improved or deteriorated to contribute to the outcome, fails to capture whether youths' behavioural trajectories have taken a more prosocial turn, and does not speak to whether their criminogenic needs have been sufficiently and appropriately addressed during the diversion intervention.

It is not enough to condemn the process of diversion based on small or non-significant reductions in recidivism; there needs to be an examination of youths' background and criminogenic need areas to understand potentially *why* they did or did not reoffend. As noted by Schwalbe et al. (2012), research on diversion programs is still emerging and has not yet begun to examine questions about program effectiveness when matching interventions to clients. The research literature supports the RNR model's premise of providing appropriate services to address the criminogenic need areas of an offender to see the person's risk of reoffending decrease. Currently, studies and program evaluations for diversion programs have only examined the surface of these programs. If all diversion programs are individualized to their respective communities, then the results of one general

outcome (i.e., recidivism) may not be generalizable to different jurisdictions and may not provide sufficient evidence to inform program operators as to whether diversion is an effective alternative to traditional criminal justice system processing. A thorough and useful examination of diversion will be able to explore processes through which a youth is referred (e.g., limited or pervasive use of discretionary power), how the youth is assessed upon entry to the program (e.g., through the use of standardized assessment measures), to which programs the youth is referred (e.g., availability of programs within the community, match with identified criminogenic need and responsivity factors), and the quality with which the youth participates (e.g., level of engagement in the content of the program).

The current research addresses these gaps in the diversion literature through an in-depth examination of a diversion program strategy recently implemented within the province of New Brunswick by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). This dissertation focuses specifically on the RCMP's Youth Intervention and Diversion (YID) strategy by means of a combined method study consisting of an archival examination of existing youth case files and interviews with youth who have participated in the process. The evaluation of the RCMP YID strategy and its characteristics will contribute to the diversion literature because, to date, there have been no published systematic evaluations of an Atlantic Canadian youth diversion process by independent researchers, and few of diversion programs that integrate the RNR principles and risk assessment screening into its standard operating procedure. Results from this research are important for informing the processes and operations of the YID strategy as well as other diversion programs for at-risk youth.

**RCMP J Division Youth Intervention and Diversion (YID) Strategy**

In 2009, the RCMP's Youth, Aboriginal, and Crime Prevention unit in New Brunswick (J Division) released the *Five Year Strategic Plan* to structure the RCMP's interactions with youth who come into contact with the law (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2009). This strategic plan was consistent with the RNR framework, youth diversion literature, principles of effective rehabilitation and reintegration, and the guidelines from the National Youth Intervention and Diversion Program of the RCMP. This plan detailed how J Division of the RCMP (i.e., branch of the RCMP in New Brunswick) would work toward becoming a national leader in crime prevention by reinstating crime prevention as a foundational element of their response to crime. To achieve this goal, the RCMP stated that it would engage all RCMP employees, other policing services, community services and citizens in crime prevention. Importantly, the strategic plan stressed that 'crime reduction' and 'crime prevention' were not to be viewed as separate processes. Rather, these concepts needed to be viewed as complementary processes with one focusing on current offenders' behaviour and the other focusing on the future generation of offenders. This approach to policing was vastly different from previous years, in which crime prevention was considered a 'feel good' exercise that focused on education and awareness with young children and adolescents (RCMP, 2009). Now, crime prevention is a legislated component of the RCMP's mandate under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (2002), which states that police organizations are required to support crime prevention by referring youth to community-based services to address underlying factors that contribute to their antisocial behaviour.

To achieve the goal of becoming national crime prevention leaders, J Division established a set of guiding principles within the strategic plan for officer conduct that included aspects covering the use of evidence-based decision-making methods, cultural sensitivity, collaboration with community partners and the promotion of community-led/police supported responses to crime and victimization. Furthermore, J Division committed to promoting a balanced approach to crime prevention that relies on the assessment and identification of a youth's risk level and incorporates an associated continuum of responses ranging from minimum contact to full contact with the criminal justice system (e.g., education and awareness, early intervention, diversion, sanctions, enforcement, suppression, and reintegration). Additionally, ongoing evaluation of the *Five Year Strategic Plan* was included in the guiding principles in an effort to ensure the RCMP meets the needs of citizens and maintains a balance of proactive and reactive efforts within communities. Finally, J Division committed to sharing the knowledge, experience, and expertise of their organization's members as a means of educating and assisting other policing organizations, community partners, and citizens at large (RCMP, 2009). These guiding principles are used to address three specific strategic priorities: intervention and diversion of youth aged 12 to 17 years who come into conflict with the law; establishment of a pool of "crime prevention professionals" within its membership equipped to deliver the J Division crime prevention mandate effectively to community partners (i.e., Community Program Officers); and to ensure the strategic use of financial and knowledge resources within the communities they serve.

The RCMP's strategy attempts to capitalize on frontline staff and police officers as community leaders, as well as early interveners for those who are most at-risk in their daily lives of becoming involved in crime (RCMP, 2009). The strategy was first implemented throughout the province of New Brunswick in 2009 in both urban and rural areas where the RCMP was the primary policing agency. A specialized position was created within the RCMP for individuals to lead the diversion strategy; the Community Program Officers were provided with training on a variety of pertinent topics including the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, the RNR model, risk assessment, YID policies, and intervention techniques (e.g., Motivational Interviewing). In addition to receiving this training, the Community Program Officers introduced the YID strategy to each community through a number of methods, (e.g., town hall meetings, community presentations, individualized presentations to community service representatives) to explain the new approach the RCMP was developing for youth and to also find community agencies to become part of a diversion committee. As each community has different services and agencies, the composition of the diversion committees varies between districts in the province.

Although differences in committee membership and availability of services exist, the diversion process has a similar underlying procedure that is followed in each district. When a youth first comes into contact with the police, the officer determines whether the youth is chargeable for the offence and completes a checklist that outlines the extrajudicial measures that may be used with the youth (e.g., no further action, informal warning, formal caution, referral to service). If the officer determines that a specially trained RCMP member should be consulted to assist in identifying and



addressing the youth's risk factors (i.e., Community Program Officer), then the officer can request a consultation. If the Community Program Officer determines a further referral should be made, then a risk screening tool (i.e., *Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory: Screening Version*; Hoge & Andrews, 2004) is completed to identify a youth's risk and criminogenic needs and to help assist in directing the diversion process. The referred youth and his/her guardian(s) complete a consent form for the RCMP to obtain and disclose information among other community agencies (e.g., Addictions and Mental Health, school boards, John Howard Society). In some instances, the Community Program Officer will complete a full risk assessment using the *Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory 2.0* (YLS/CMI; Hoge & Andrews, 2011) and all collected information is then brought to a YID committee comprised of representatives from government agencies and non-governmental organizations to collaborate and determine the best services to address the youth's criminogenic need areas. YID team members (i.e., those present at the committee case conferences) request updates on youth progress and compliance, all of which are documented in the RCMP's electronic database and paper-based files. When diversion referral recommendations are completed, the file is forwarded to the police officers that had the initial contact with the youth for the file to be closed. A formal evaluation of this program has yet to be completed, and was requested by the RCMP in J Division.

### **Hypotheses and Predictions**

The central thesis of the present research is that youth who come into contact with the RCMP and are diverted away from the traditional criminal justice system are

expected to experience benefits from diversion programming because of its individualized attention to identified criminogenic needs and overall recidivism risk level. This general prediction provides the basis for the research questions and specific hypotheses explored within this research:

1. The present dissertation examines which youth, upon police contact, were diverted into the YID process and which youth received other outcomes (e.g., no further action required, processed through the traditional criminal justice system). Consistent with the target population of the program and previous research, youth of low risk to reoffend are expected to comprise the youth who are not processed through the YID and those of medium risk would comprise the majority of those who are referred to the YID (Wilson & Hoge, 2013a). High risk youth are predicted to not be included in the YID programming (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a; RCMP, 2009; Wilson & Hoge, 2013a). Consistent with previous research, it is expected to see a higher number of males compared to females in the diversion programs (e.g., Schwalbe et al., 2012; Wilson & Hoge, 2013a). An equal distribution of youth across the program eligibility age range of 12-to-17 years is expected, consistent with the RCMP's mandate for the YID strategy and previous diversion research (e.g., Cuellar et al., 2006).
2. Second, the present dissertation examines the outcomes of diversion for youth. Overall, it is predicted that of the youth who are diverted into the YID process, fewer will reoffend. It is also expected that there will be a lower rate of reoffending compared to youth who were not diverted (i.e., received no further

action or were processed through the traditional criminal justice system). It is predicted that diverted youth who were provided with intervention intensity matching their identified risk level will show the lowest rates of reoffending. Gender differences are expected to emerge when examining recidivism rates, with males committing more reoffences than females, consistent with previous meta-analytic results (Cottle, Lee, & Heilbrun, 2001).

3. Third, the degree to which diversion case management adheres to the RNR principles was investigated. It is expected that there will be, on average, low rates of adherence to the RNR model (i.e., one or none of the principles met) in diversion cases, consistent with previous research on the real world application of the principles (e.g., Campbell et al., 2014, Polaschek, 2012). For cases in which high rates of adherence to the model are found (i.e., all three core principles met), fewer re-contact incidents with the police and larger reductions in youths' criminogenic needs and overall risk level are expected compared with cases that have low adherence to the RNR model. It is expected that larger treatment gains will be observed in younger justice-involved youth regardless of risk level, as previous research has demonstrated that these individuals are more open to the intervention processes than older youth (e.g., Latimer et al., 2003).
4. Finally, this dissertation examines consumer experiences of the YID implementation and processes. Consistent with previous research, positive attitudes toward the diversion process from consumers are expected (e.g., Fader, Lockwood, Schall, & Stokes, 2015; Sherman et al., 2005).

## Method

### Overview

As each program evaluation is unique to the program under examination, a comprehensive, universal definition of program evaluation has yet to be reached (Poht, Lamarche, Yapp, Sulla, & Chisamore, 2014). Instead, researchers have described the process as a systematic evaluation of a program, policy, or procedure that pays particular attention to the value and effectiveness of the process (e.g., Patton, 1997; Scriven, 1991; Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). Additionally, Frechtling (2002) stated that an evaluation should be conducted for “action-related purposes” (p. 3), meaning that the results should be translated into changes within the program to make it more effective and efficient. Program evaluations are useful as they can provide valuable feedback to improve processes, provide new, unanticipated information on program processes, and demonstrate the program’s effectiveness to stakeholders (Bond, Boyd, Rapp, Raphael, & Sizemore, 1997; Frechtling, 2002). A thorough program evaluation consists of multiple steps and considers the context within which a program is implemented (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1998). As outlined by Frechtling (2002), the first step consists of designing a conceptual model, also referred to as a logic model, that outlines the inputs (e.g., resources), activities, short-term outcomes, and long-term outcomes of a program. See Appendix A for the logic model created for the present dissertation in consultation with RCMP upper management and YID program supervisors, and with direction from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s *Logic Model Development Guide* (2004). Following agreement upon the logic model, evaluation questions and measurable outcomes are developed

(Frechtling, 2002). After the evaluation questions and outcomes are defined, subsequent stages in study design development, data analysis, and information dissemination phases take place, which are akin to the stages found in other types of research studies.

The present dissertation used a combined methodological approach to program evaluation to explore the impact of the RCMP YID strategy for youth who come into contact with the law, and represented two components of a larger scale evaluation of the YID program that also included interviews with staff and community professionals who worked with the YID program youth and a survey of police officers who referred to the program. A combined method allows for deeper understanding of the strengths, weaknesses and context of the strategy implementation through the examination of both qualitative and quantitative data that reflect program effects on criminogenic need changes and recidivism outcomes (Abrams, Shannon & Sangalang, 2008; Bledsoe & Graham 2005; Davies, & Ross, 2013; Kelle, 2006; Kisely et al., 2010; Miller & Fredericks, 2006). The timing of the qualitative and quantitative procedures in a combined method design is not crucial but they typically are consecutive, not concurrent (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Miller & Fredericks, 2006). The present study collected much of the quantitative data first due to the volume of computer and paper files that were to be coded and entered into a database. Qualitative data were collected second.

The qualitative portion of the present study's method consisted of one individual interview with a previously diverted youth. The specific qualitative approach taken when conducting the interview was the interpretative

phenomenological stance. The interpretive phenomenological approach respects the unique experience of each participant and his or her point of view by taking the stance that there is not “one reality” in the world and that each event is experienced uniquely by each individual (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Furthermore, this individual reality is affected by interactions with other human beings and systems and is described by specific words and phrases by the individual, making analysis of language essential to understanding their experience accurately (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Under the interpretive phenomenological umbrella, the youth interview was conceptualized and conducted in an issue-oriented manner. This type of approach allowed the interview to be focused on a specific topic of interest (e.g., experience of YID), but aimed at generating information about how people viewed their experience of that specific topic (Gergen, 2014; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Conducting this type of issue-focused interview allowed for exploration of the strengths and challenges of YID implementation and allowed for exploration of the process from the consumer point of view (i.e., key points and lessons learned from going through the process).

Typical guidelines for qualitative study sample sizes range from between three and 16 individuals (Robinson, 2014) as this range is large enough to gather diverse experiences, but not too large that the experiences of individuals become anonymous among a large amount of data (Robinson & Smith, 2010). Thematic saturation (i.e., no new themes emerging from qualitative interviews) has been observed within the first six to 12 interviews in some studies, particularly when interviews are structured and the samples are somewhat homogeneous (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Thus, research suggests that the smaller target samples sizes for the qualitative portion of the

present dissertation are sufficient to provide information for the hypotheses under examination.

### **Participants for Qualitative Method**

The youth sample used in the qualitative aspect of the present dissertation was both purposive, in that it was selected to answer specific research questions, and relied on a convenience sample recruitment to capture youth willing to serve as participants in the study (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Twelve youth and their guardians who had previously consented to being contacted by an RCMP representative for a follow-up assessment (see Appendix B) were offered the opportunity to participate in an interview with the primary researcher. The primary researcher contacted these youths' guardians by telephone and introduced the program evaluation, as well as the goals of the study. The guardian was offered an invitation for his/her son or daughter to participate in an interview session and the primary researcher requested verbal permission to explain the study to the youth over the phone. When the youth was not available, the guardian was asked to consent to participation, and youth assent was sought at the time of the interview appointment. If a youth had reached the legal age of majority (i.e., 19 years of age), then his/her consent was sought directly and parental consent was not requested. After the guardian and the youth agreed to participate, the primary researcher scheduled a date and time for the interview to take place at either of the University of New Brunswick campuses (i.e., Fredericton or Saint John), or over the telephone. When contact was not made on the first phone call attempt, two additional phone calls were placed at different times of the day to make contact with the guardian and his or her youth (e.g.,

morning or early evening). When the opportunity arose, I left a voicemail message identifying myself by name, affiliation with the University of New Brunswick, and noted that there was an opportunity to participate in a research project that might be of interest to the guardian. Given that voicemail messages may be heard by others than for whom they were intended, no mention was made of the research project's affiliation with the RCMP or the YID strategy to protect the confidentiality of the youth. See Appendix C for the telephone and voicemail script.

Following this procedure, one guardian consented to have their child participate in an interview and the youth provided assent to participate in the interview. The youth was male, Caucasian, and was 14 years of age at the time of the interview. The interview took place over the telephone in a private room at the New Brunswick RCMP head office in Fredericton, NB.

### **Participants for Quantitative Method**

*Youth Case Files.* To complete the quantitative portion of this study, 200 youth case files were randomly selected from a pool of approximately 1400 youth who had come into contact with the RCMP between January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2012. This time period reflected the first year after the publication and implementation of the J Division official policy for the YID strategy guidelines and, thus, the beginning of the present strategy under evaluation. The cases were followed up for recidivism data until November 1, 2014, reflecting the beginning of the present dissertation. The number of participants was selected using G\*Power software (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) which indicated that a sample of 196 participants would be



necessary for 80% power to detect a statistical significance ( $p < .05$ ) of a medium effect size based on a 3 x 5 factorial analysis of variance.

Half of these case files ( $n = 100$ ; 65 male, 34 female, 1 other) represented youth who had come into contact with the RCMP and were subsequently diverted into the YID process (YID youth). As the RCMP YID program does not specify a target risk-level for inclusion into the process, Low, Medium, and High risk youth cases were included in the sample. Risk level was obtained from the *Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory: Screening Version* (Hoge & Andrews, 2004) forms that were completed in real time by the Community Program Officers. It was expected that a larger portion of the sample would be rated as Medium or Low risk as this is the typical target population for diversion programs. The resultant sample reflected a heavier emphasis on diverting youth of lower risk level with 34 cases in the Low risk category, 37 cases in the Medium risk category, and 28 cases in the High risk category.

The remaining half of cases ( $n = 100$ , 65 male, 35 female) represented a sample of youth who came into contact with the RCMP and who were not diverted into the YID process (non-YID youth). Non-YID cases were obtained through a matching procedure in which files were selected based upon a match with specified variables from each YID case: age at index contact (years), gender, ethnicity, and whether or not the index offence for the present study was the youth's first contact with the RCMP. Matching during the data selection process was completed to ensure that the sample sizes remained large enough to complete data analyses, as sample

sizes tend to decrease when matching on multiple variables takes place after data collection (West et al., 2014).

The majority of these youth case files did not have ethnicity recorded ( $n = 111$ ; 55.5%). For cases in which ethnicity was reported, Caucasian was the most prevalent ( $n = 81$ ; 40.5%), followed by First Nations ( $n = 7$ ; 3.5%). YID and non-YID cases did not significantly differ on gender,  $\chi^2(2) = 1.014, p = .602$ , ethnicity,  $\chi^2(3) = 1.164, p = .762$ , the age of index contact,  $F(1, 199) = .028, p = .867$ , or whether the index offence contact was the youth's first contact with the RCMP,  $\chi^2(1) = .021, p = .885$ . See Table 1 for the demographic composition of the YID and non-YID groups.

## Measures

### **Quantitative method.**

*Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory 2.0 (YLS/CMI 2.0; Hoge & Andrews, 2011).*

The YLS/CMI 2.0 is a 42-item risk assessment instrument based on the RNR model of offender risk assessment and case management designed for use by professionals in justice, forensic, prevention and correctional agencies. It is an assessor-rated protocol that measures the criminogenic needs and case management concerns of justice-involved youth aged 12-to-18 years of age. The YLS/CMI 2.0 assesses static/unchanging factors (e.g., previous criminal history) as well as dynamic/malleable factors (e.g., association with criminal peers). The inclusion of dynamic factors is important to the assessment process as it makes the instrument more sensitive to changes over time due to treatment interventions (Campbell, French, & Gendreau, 2009; Schmidt, Campbell, & Houlding, 2011). The YLS/CMI 2.0 also

identifies a youth's areas of strength and protective factors. The recording of strengths is not used in calculating the youth's risk score, but it is important for case planning.

The assessment protocol relies on archival (e.g., file review), youth self-report interview, and collateral information sources to score (e.g., parents, teachers; Holsinger, Lowenkamp, & Latessa 2006). Eight criminogenic areas are covered in the assessment, including offence history, family circumstances/parenting interactions, education status, peer relations, substance use/abuse, leisure/recreation activities, personality/behaviour patterns, and attitudes/orientation. Items are scored either *present* (1) or *absent* (0), resulting in a total score range of 0 to 42 with higher scores indicating a higher risk of future criminal behaviour and an increased need for intervention. Of the eight criminogenic areas examined, those that have the highest risk/need scores are suggested to be used as guides for the type of interventions required. Based on obtained total scores, the authors identify overall general recidivism risk levels as follows: Low (0-8), Medium (9-22), High (23-34) and Very High (35-42). Onifade et al. (2008) suggest that, for each point increase on the original version of the YLS/CMI, there is a 5% increase in the odds of a youth reoffending.

The YLS/CMI 2.0 is a revised version of the YLS/CMI (Hoge & Andrews, 2002). This revision includes updated norms, an expanded section outlining an individual's responsivity factors, and increases the upper age limit from 17 to 18 years. Importantly, the key risk and criminogenic need sections have not been altered, allowing the YLS/CMI 2.0 to rest on the strong psychometric properties of the YLS/CMI (Albanese, 2014). Internal psychometric properties for the YLS/CMI and

YLS/CMI 2.0 are sound, as reported in the test manuals (Hoge & Andrews, 2002; Hoge & Andrews, 2011). The YLS/CMI has demonstrated moderate to high predictive validity for violent, nonviolent, and general recidivism for both male and female youth (Caldwell & Dickinson, 2009; Campbell, Onifade, et al., 2014; Catchpole & Gretton, 2003; Jung & Rawana, 1999; Onifade et al., 2008; Schmidt et al., 2005, 2011; Schwalbe, 2008). Additionally, the YLS/CMI has demonstrated utility in predicting overall rates of recidivism in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth (Olver, Stockdale, & Wormith, 2009; Luong & Wormith, 2011). The YLS/CMI total score also has been positively associated with time to reoffend, meaning that as the YLS/CMI total score increases, youths tend to reoffend more quickly than lower scoring youth (Rennie & Dolan, 2010).

The inter-rater reliability of scores on the YLS/CMI and YLS/CMI 2.0, when completed by different raters, is very high (e.g., Caldwell & Dickinson, 2009; Onifade et al., 2008; Schmidt et al. 2005, 2011). One identified area of weakness of the YLS/CMI is that it is less able to discriminate recidivism rates for Medium and High risk youth (Onifade et al., 2008). However, it is useful for discriminating Low from High risk youth, which is a more pertinent focus of the present research. Overall, the YLS/CMI 2.0 has been described as an effective tool for assisting with case planning and the measurement of risk change over time.

In the present study, the YLS/CMI 2.0 had an internal reliability rating of less than adequate ( $\alpha = .64$ ), as defined by Hunsley and Mash (2008). It is important to note that only five fully completed YLS/CMI 2.0 instruments were used in the reliability analysis and the resultant alpha value could be unstable.

*Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory: Screening Version*  
(YLS/CMI: SV, Hoge & Andrews, 2004).

The YLS/CMI:SV was developed to be used as a quick and reliable screening instrument to identify youth who require further assessment to ensure their criminogenic risk and need factors are addressed. The YLS/CMI:SV is a risk screening tool that examines the same eight criminogenic risk and need areas as the YLS/CMI for youth aged 12-to-17 years. The screening version is eight items in length, with each criminogenic area having only one item. Six of the items (history of conduct disorder, current school/employment problems, some criminal friends, alcohol/drug problems, leisure/recreation, personality/behaviour) are scored as either *no/not present*, receiving a score of 0, or *yes/present*, receiving a score of 1. The remaining two areas, examining family circumstances and the attitudes/orientation of the youth, are rated on a 4-point scale ranging from *positive supportive family/attitude system* (0) to *very poor family situation/an extreme antisocial and procriminal attitude* (3); ratings of 0 or 1 receive a score of 0, while ratings of 2 or 3 receive a score of 1. Items can be omitted in situations when there is limited information available to the assessor. The manual indicates that when more than two items are omitted, the screening tool may be considered invalid (Hoge & Andrews, 2004).

Total scores on the YLS/CMI:SV range from 0 to 8, with higher scores indicating a higher level of risk to reoffend and a higher need for intervention and/or further assessment. The manual provides no cut-off scores for Low, Medium or High risk to reoffend. For the purposes of the present study, the cut-off scores suggested by the updated manual (Hoge & Andrews, 2009) were used: Low risk youth were defined

as those who received a total YLS/CMI:SV score of between 0 and 2, Medium risk youth were those who received total scores between 3 and 5, and High risk youth were those who received total scores between 6 and 8. The endorsed items on the YLS/CMI:SV are then used as guidelines for the type and intensity of intervention (e.g., diversion programs) assigned, and/or for identifying cases requiring the completion of the YLS/CMI 2.0 (Hoge & Andrews, 2004).

Research on the YLS/CMI:SV has been limited, but recently Chu and colleagues (2014) reviewed the instrument's performance with a sample of youth in Singapore. Results of the Chu, Yu, Lee, and Zeng (2014) study found the YLS/CMI:SV to have adequate predictive validity for violent, non-violent and general recidivism. In the study, the YLS/CMI:SV total score was found to be predictive of general and non-violent recidivism for male and female offenders (Chu, Yu, Lee, & Zeng, 2014). Using the cut-off scores outlined by Hoge and Andrews (2009), Chu and colleagues found the overall risk classification able to discriminate between the three groups (Low, Medium, High) adequately for violent, non-violent and general recidivism. Internal reliability for the YLS/CMI:SV for the present study was acceptable ( $\alpha = .76$ ) for the diverted youth sample. YLS/CMI:SV forms were not completed for non-YID youth.

The predictive validity of the YLS/CMI:SV was evaluated to determine the degree to which it predicted recidivism in the current sample of diverted youth. Over the 2.5 year follow-up period, the YLS/CMI:SV produced a small effect size for general recidivism in the overall sample of diverted youth (AUC = .595, 95% CI = .475 to .715). A medium effect size was observed for male youth (AUC = .634, 95%

CI = .479 to .790) and a null effect size was observed for female youth (AUC = .533, 95% CI = .332 to .731). These results are somewhat smaller than what was obtained by Chu and colleagues (2014). However, it should be noted that the original purpose of the YLS/CMI:SV was not to predict reoffending behaviour. Rather, it was intended to identify individuals who could benefit from further examination into their criminogenic needs.

***Index offence & recidivism data.***

The RCMP granted the primary researcher access to the Police Reporting and Occurrence System (PROS), an electronic data base, to gather criminal history information, identify the index offence that led to a diversion referral, and to identify criminal behaviour since the index offence. A recidivism event was defined as any new contact with the RCMP as a “subject of complaint” (i.e., no arrest necessary and not as a victim), either during the diversion period or during the follow-up period. Although this definition has been identified as potentially overestimating reoffending behaviour given its broader inclusion of non-charge contacts (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007), a key characteristic of the RCMP YID process is to engage with each youth at the time of contact with the police rather than wait for a formal arrest or charge. Importantly, in order for a youth to be coded in the RCMP database as a “subject of complaint”, enough evidence of an offence needs to be present to support a charge recommendation against the youth or further investigation by the police officer into the situation. Using this category as the reoffence contact criteria reduces the likelihood of overestimating reoffending behaviour because there is evidence to support that an offence actually took place.

In cases where more than one offence was committed in a single criminal event (e.g., theft and assault) both events were recorded, as was the most serious offence to capture both the variety and the seriousness of recidivism. The outcome of each police contact also was documented (e.g., verbal or written warning, formal caution, YID referral, extrajudicial sanction or arrest).

Index and reoffence events for all cases were coded according to the severity of the recidivism event using a modified version of the *Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services Most Serious Classification* system (Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services, 1995), which assigns to offences a rating from 25 (*most serious*; e.g., murder) to 1 (*least serious*; e.g., bylaw violations). The original version of the scale has reverse ratings (e.g., murder is rated as 1 and less serious violations are rated with higher numbers), but the modified version makes more intuitive sense using an increasing severity scale and has been used in previous evaluation studies (e.g., Campbell et al., 2014). Criminal events also were categorized into one of the five following offence categories: violent (e.g., murder, attempted murder, assault-related offences, robbery, weapons-related offences, uttering threats, arson and assault), nonviolent (e.g., break and enter, fraud, theft, property damage, miscellaneous against morals, obstruction of justice, dangerous driving, and miscellaneous against public order), sexual (e.g., sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual interference, indecent exposure, child pornography-related offences), drug-related (e.g., trafficking/importing, drug possession, driving while under the influence, Liquor Control Act offences) or technical (e.g., breach of recognizance, failure to comply/appear).



Reoffence information was collected from the date of the youth's index event until the present study's start date of November 1, 2014. All time between offences was considered free time in the community that the youth had the opportunity to reoffend. This time could not be adjusted to account for detention or incarceration time, as that type of information was not recorded in the Police Reporting and Occurrence System (PROS) database. No significant difference was observed between YID and non-YID youth on the length of follow-up time,  $F(1, 199) = .101, p = .75$ . See Table 1 for details of the follow-up length for YID and non-YID youth.

***Adherence to the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model (Hanson, Bourgon, Helmus, & Hodgson, 2009).***

Youth intervention and diversion case plans were coded with reference to the degree of adherence to the RNR model through the use of a coding system that has been previously developed (Hanson et al., 2009). Specifically, case plans were coded as adhering to the Risk principle when there was an indication that higher intensity interventions were provided to higher risk youth (e.g., larger number of sessions in a program, longer hours required per session) and lower/no intervention to lower risk individuals. Adherence to the Need principle was coded as present if the majority of intervention programs the youth was referred to target the criminogenic needs that were identified as high need areas for the youth by means of a structured assessment measure like the YLS/CMI 2.0 or the YLS/CMI:SV (e.g., poor cognitive problem solving, negative peer associations, drug/alcohol use, antisocial behaviour, impulsive tendencies, unstructured leisure time, and education; Hanson et al., 2009). Each individual criminogenic need also was coded as properly targeted or not. Finally,

Responsivity principle adherence was coded as present when there was documentation to indicate that an intervention case plan was tailored to match the youth's strengths and limitations (e.g., using concrete psychoeducational material and learning models for offenders with cognitive difficulties) and when evidence-based interventions were used (e.g., cognitive behavioural approaches, social learning approaches; Andrews & Dowden, 2007). To be fully informed about the nature of interventions used with youth, program manuals/brochures, research articles, accreditation credentials and contact with program facilitators were used to understand their nature and content when necessary (e.g., program is unfamiliar, content/strategies of program are unknown). This procedure is consistent with what was followed in a recent evaluation for community-supervised offenders in New Brunswick (Campbell et al., 2014). The overall score for case plan RNR adherence ranged from *No Adherence* (0) to *Full Adherence* (4), with a score of 4 meaning that all core RNR principles (Risk, Need, General Responsivity, Specific Responsivity) were followed within the youth's intervention plan.

### **Procedure**

The present evaluation was requested by Inspector Rick Shaw of the RCMP J Division, Officer in Charge, Atlantic Youth Intervention and Diversion, and was overseen by Inspector Lucie DuBois, Officer in Charge, J Division Crime Reduction, and Sergeant Scott Sawyer, Crime Reduction Coordinator for J Division. Ethical approval for this project was provided by the University of New Brunswick Saint John's Human Research Ethics Board. A research contract was signed between the primary researcher, the researcher's supervisor, the University of New Brunswick

Saint John, and the RCMP for the evaluation of the Youth Intervention and Diversion Strategy with the assistance of the Office of Research Services at the University of New Brunswick. A court order was obtained from a Youth Court Judge to gain access to the youth police records.

Given that the archival information used in the current study was collected for a previous purpose (e.g., documenting youth contact with the RCMP), the Tri-Council Policy criteria governing the use of data for secondary research purposes needed to be met. As Article 5.5 in the Tri-Council Policy states:

Researchers who have not obtained consent from participants for secondary use of identifiable information shall only use such information for (research purposes) if the [Research Ethics Board] is satisfied that “(1) the research project requires identifiable information (e.g., case file data), (2) [the research] is unlikely to [to have] adverse effects [on] the participants if their identifiable information is used, (3) the researchers will take appropriate measures to ensure [that] the privacy of [all] individuals is protected and the identifiable information is kept in a secured form, (4) the researchers comply with any previously known preferences expressed by participants regarding the use of their information, (5) it is impractical to seek consent from participants, and (6) the researchers have obtained the necessary permission for the secondary use of the information (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010, p. 62).

A random selection of case files was required to ensure inclusion of a range of risk levels in the youth diversion sample. Records kept by the RCMP are organized by name and date of birth and this identifiable information is unable to be separated from the YID program information (e.g., intake risk level, program referrals).

There was minimal risk of harm to participants during the archival file review given that the results are only reported in aggregate form and precautions were taken to ensure the confidentiality of the information accessed for the current study (e.g., names and dates of birth were not recorded). All case files remained at the RCMP J Division head office where they were originally viewed. Records containing health or mental health information were not reviewed. Information that was accessed included RCMP case notes, risk assessment information, program completion or discharge reports that were provided to the RCMP by agencies providing services to the diverted youth, and criminal record information from the RCMP electronic database. I obtained the necessary security clearance from the RCMP, received training on the electronic database system and was authorized to access and review all case files required to carry out this research.

As the YID strategy does not specifically target one youth risk level, there exists the potential for High risk youth to also be diverted from the criminal justice system and into YID programming. Justice-involved youth of higher risk to reoffend are less likely to agree to be involved in research due to a greater tendency towards anti-authority and non-cooperative behaviours, typical of conduct disordered youth. Exclusion of these individuals would result in a skewed lower risk sample population and limit the interpretation and generalizability of the study's results. Thus, it was

necessary to select a random sample of cases from Low, Medium, and High risk groups to ensure the results of the diversion program evaluation provide the most useful information about its affect on all types of justice-involved youth recidivism.

Any data removed from the office was stripped of all identifying information and given arbitrary research identification numbers. The completed data collection protocols used for the present study are stored on the University of New Brunswick Saint John campus, in a locked filing cabinet in the locked offices of the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies. They will be kept in this location for seven years and then destroyed by a confidential shredding service. No direct contact was sought from the individuals whose case files were accessed by any member of the research team. Furthermore, approval was received from the University of New Brunswick Saint John's Research Ethics Board, and permission to access youth records for research purposes was sought and received from a Youth Court Judge in Saint John, NB as required under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, section 119.

I received training on the RCMP Police Reporting and Occurrence System database from the RCMP to access demographic, criminal history, and YID committee information (e.g., referrals, completion rates). Only the primary researcher and a secondary coder viewed the randomly selected cases. The secondary coder was a civilian member of the RCMP in the Crime Reduction Unit, who held the necessary security clearance to view the case information, and was involved in the present study solely for the purpose of assessing inter-rater reliability of the coding guides.

### **Quantitative data.**

The RCMP's electronic database and divisional paper-based files were accessed to obtain demographic information including age, gender, ethnicity, geographic location, risk, and criminogenic need scores as measured by the YLS/CMI 2.0 (Hoge & Andrews, 2011) and its screening version. Furthermore, information on the index offence(s), the age of first offence, the type of outcome the youth received (e.g., caution, formal caution, referral to community service, referral to YID, sanction), the outcome of the diversion process (e.g., completed, non-compliant) and recidivism events (i.e., new contact with RCMP) were recorded from the database. See Appendix D for the data collection protocol form used to record youth information. RCMP representatives were consulted during the construction of the data collection form to ensure the type of information that the researcher desired was available in the database and case files. A secondary coder coded 20% of cases for the purpose of assessing inter-rater reliability. The secondary coder was a civilian member of the RCMP, employed as a data analyst by the organization. A kappa of .70 was set as the threshold for acceptable inter-rater agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977), with a kappa of achieved.

### **Qualitative data.**

A semi-structured interview protocol for use with youth who had participated in YID were created for the present dissertation and reflected a focus on the individual youth experience with the diversion process (see Appendix E). The youth and his guardian were asked to provide assent and consent, respectfully, for the interview before it took place (see Appendix F). The individual interview took approximately 30

minutes. The youth was requested to provide demographic information to contextualize interview responses (see Appendix G).

The interview was audio recorded to allow for transcription at a later date. Audio recording allowed me to focus on the direction of the interview and to attend to details and impressions of the participant in real time (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1984). Precautions were taken to protect the interview audio recording: the recording audio file was assigned a random identification number and was kept on an encrypted USB memory stick. The recording was de-identified during transcription (i.e., names and locations were removed) and during the interview the youth was encouraged not to use names when describing individuals and/or situations. I also made an explicit statement that I would not be addressing the individual by their name (first or last) during the interview. Additionally, no direct contact occurred with any youth or guardian who had not signed a consent form permitting contact for the purposes of a follow-up assessment pertaining to this program evaluation.

A number of cautions were considered when conducting the qualitative portion of this research. First, there was a possibility that the interview participant might feel there was a “right” answer or might not know the answers to questions (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008). This concern was addressed during the consent process preceding the interview by informing the participant of the purpose of the interview (i.e., to understand personal experiences with YID and opinions on the process) and encouraging the respondent to be as open as possible, noting that positive, negative, and neutral responses are all welcomed. Even though individuals are told that the purpose of the interview is to understand their point of view, people are not always

forthcoming when asked personal questions (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008). For the present study, no in-depth personal questions unrelated to YID were asked during the interview process. However, to receive the most accurate information from participant interviews, the primary researcher made an explicit statement during the consent process that all responses would be kept confidential and any quotations to be used in the project results would be anonymized.

An additional criticism of interview data is that people may not provide the most accurate information. Specifically, participants may be influenced by heightened anxiety regarding the interview process and critics have argued that some respondents are generally unable to look at themselves in a realistic, unbiased manner (Kelle, 2006; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008). In a phenomenological approach, the purpose of the interview is to gather each participant's unique perceptions and interpretations of the YID process. Additionally, I was able to balance potentially biased reviews of the YID strategy by using the quantitative data gathered to provide an objective, statistical picture of the process (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008). Aside from not providing the most accurate information, it is also possible that interviews could raise more questions than answers, and may take longer to complete than researchers originally estimate (Carrera-Fernández, Guàrdia-Olmos, & Però-Cebollero, 2014). To counter these difficulties, the interviewer must be able to keep the interview on topic (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1984) and I was prepared to do so with the aid of a semi-structured interview protocol and my training in clinical interviewing skills.

With respect to the process of interviewing, there is a risk of touching on topics that may make the participant more uncomfortable or emotional than if they



were to fill out self-report questionnaires (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008). To counter this possibility, check-ins were performed during the interview to ensure the participant was in an emotionally stable state of mind and felt safe when the interview was completed. The participant denied experiencing high emotional arousal during the interview process, likely due to the fact that the questions were not directed toward his personal life. However, a list of names and contact information for local support services was available should the participant have been in need of support after the interview. An additional concern for qualitative research is that interviewer bias may enter into the analytic process (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008). To ensure neutrality was maintained during the interview, as well as during the transcription and analytic process, the interview followed a pre-determined protocol and was audio recorded, with the transcription being reviewed by a second rater for accuracy. The second rater was an undergraduate student at the University of New Brunswick who listened to the audio recording and ensured verbatim accuracy in the transcription. It has been stated that recording devices may distract the participant (Rosenthal & Rosnew, 2008). Thus, a digital audio recording device that was silent and not of an intrusive size was used, to minimize the distraction to both the participant and the interviewer.

As a whole, there are no definitive guidelines for excellence when conducting qualitative research because the nature of the method requires flexibility (Gergen, 2014). Despite the absence of concrete and specific rules, Gergen (2014) recommends that excellence is able to be achieved in qualitative research by showing respect for the voice of those represented through ensuring accurate verbatim quotations and the presentation of balanced quotes (e.g., not all positive or negative). The interpretive

phenomenological approach used in the present study ensured that the individual's experience was respected and an effort was made to present a balance of positive and negative quotations towards YID processes.

### **Results**

The analyses for the present dissertation explore two areas of the YID process. The first represent the outcome of the YID program, focusing on the behavioural outcomes for the youth and what is taken away from the experience of diversion. The second area examines the processes of the program from the consumer perspective.

Prior to analyses, data were screened for accuracy, completeness, outliers, and for the assumptions of the specific procedures with which data are analyzed (e.g., skewness, kurtosis, non-linearity, multicollinearity, sphericity). The dataset containing youth case information was cleaned and screened for missing data. Frequency statistics were examined to ensure that all values were within the expected ranges for each item and to detect data entry errors. The quantity and pattern of missing data was examined using the Missing Values Analysis in the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

When examining non-YID cases, a non-significant Little's MCAR test was obtained,  $\chi^2(69) = 88.47, p = .057$ , indicating that data were missing completely at random. As this result was trending toward statistical significance, visual inspection of the missing data pattern revealed that the missing values were found almost exclusively in cases where there was no re-contact with police, and thus, the information was not coded. As such, it would be inappropriate to use mean substitution on these cases because it would indicate some re-contact had occurred.

Therefore, no alterations were made to these data for those youth. A similar result was obtained when examining the YID youth data, with a non-significant result from the Little's MCAR test,  $\chi^2(1881) = 1977.44, p = .06$ , but with a trend toward statistical significance emerging. Visual inspection of the YID group's missing data pattern revealed the same information as the non-YID youth: missing data were found in cases where there was no recidivism and/or no documented case plans for the youth and, thus, missing values were clustered together within cases and not spread throughout multiple variables or cases. As noted before, it would be inappropriate to substitute values for this information. Therefore, these data were not altered and list wise deletion was employed for the statistical tests conducted when necessary (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2013). This strategy may lead to reduced power for statistical tests, but it is the most accurate method to stay true to the behaviour and case plans observed, and without overinflating rates of recidivism.

A significant Little's MCAR test was obtained when looking exclusively at the YID youth's YLS/CMI:SV ratings and total score,  $\chi^2(102) = 169.51, p < .001$ . The Criminal Peers (18%), Alcohol/Drug Problem (16%), and Leisure/Recreation (16%) items were found to have the highest number of data missing. As the YLS/CMI:SV is a risk assessment checklist, it would be inappropriate to assign a value to the instances where no value was originally assigned because it would affect the final risk classification of each youth. Therefore, a null value (i.e., '0') was substituted in where items were omitted. This procedure allowed for total risk scores to be obtained for the youth cases but not altered in a way that would overestimate the risk of reoffending level for the youth. The procedure could underestimate the risk level of each youth,

but it could be argued that if the criminogenic need had a large influence on the youth's circumstances and was readily observable to the rater, then the item would not have been omitted in the original assessment; therefore, the likelihood of underestimating risk would be considered small. Following this procedure, the internal reliability of the YLS/CMI:SV was lowered from  $\alpha = .76$  to  $\alpha = .74$ , but still remained in the adequate range for assessment measures as described by Hunsley and Mash (2008).

An examination of univariate and multivariate outliers revealed no data entry errors but did reveal two multivariate outliers, one from the YID group and one from the non-YID group. These outliers were left in the current dataset as these cases were previously matched during the coding process and removal of those two cases would result in two additional matched cases being removed as well. Further, upon examination, these outliers had a higher number of initial index offences than the majority of the sample (i.e., 3 as compared to 1). As these data were obtained from actual case records, these cases were deemed to be legitimate, and keeping them in the dataset allowed the dataset to be more representative of the population as a whole than it would be if those cases were removed (Orr, Sackett, & DuBois, 1991).

### **YID Quantitative Results**

#### **Condition of case records.**

Some case records had incomplete file information, which affected their availability for data analysis. Specifically, the majority of YID cases ( $n = 87$ ) did not have a completed Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) risk assessment form on file. Additionally, no information about the use or presence of

the YLS/CMI was found on the electronic records database used to track YID cases. The majority of YID cases ( $n = 99$ ) did have a record of the YLS/CMI:SV, which was used to classify justice-involved youth into risk levels for the present study. However, 12 of these cases did not have a valid YLS/CMI:SV on file (i.e., 11 cases had an overall YLS/CMI:SV score noted in their file but too many items had been omitted by the professional scoring the instrument to allow this score to be considered valid, as per manual instructions). Thus, for those cases, omitted items were substituted with zeros to obtain an estimate of YLS/CMI:SV scores for the present analysis, but this procedure may have underestimated the risk estimate for these youths. One youth case did not have any YLS/CMI:SV information on file and was excluded from any analyses that involved risk assessment scores. No follow-up risk assessment information was available for any of the cases included in the study; therefore, analyses examining changes in risk score over time could not be completed. It is important to note that follow-up risk assessments were not required by RCMP YID program policies, but are recommended in the general youth risk assessment literature to monitor change in risk over time and to inform discharge planning (Schmidt & Campbell, 2012).

No cases were eliminated due to missing data or outliers; however, the type of statistical analyses had to be altered due to the limited amount of information contained in reviewed records. The condition of these case files also hindered the ability to code adherence to the RNR model and youth engagement in the diversion process due to insufficient record keeping about intervention information for those youth who were referred to programs. When records were kept, information often did

not include details about the treatment orientation and methods or treatment goal definitions, and provided no documentation with regard to whether adjustments were made to case plans in consideration of general or specific responsivity factors.

Unless otherwise stated, a Cronbach's alpha level of  $p \leq .05$  was used to indicate a significant result for all subsequent analyses. See Table 2 for descriptive statistics of the sample sizes available for each statistical analysis.

### **Index offence and police officer response.**

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine group differences between YID and non-YID youth on the total number of offences committed during the index event that led to the diversion referral or control group contact. A significant Levene's test was obtained,  $F(1, 198) = 10.336, p = .002$ , indicating that the homogeneity of variances assumption of ANOVA was violated. As such, a Brown-Forsythe test statistic was used to examine group differences as it is robust against the violation of equal variances. A non-significant result was obtained,  $F(1, 198) = 2.34, p = .127$ , identifying equivalence between YID and non-YID youth on the number of offences committed during the index event (see Table 3 for a comparison of index offence characteristics of YID and non-YID groups). A second ANOVA was conducted to examine the mean severity rating of the index offence between groups and a significant Levene's test was obtained,  $F(1, 198) = 5.53, p = .020$ . Therefore, the Brown-Forsythe  $F$ -ratio was used for this analysis and also yielded a non-significant difference between groups,  $F(1, 198) = 1.42, p = .235$ , on index offence severity.

Chi Square analyses were used to examine group differences between YID and non-YID youth on the category of index offence (i.e., violent, nonviolent, sexual, drug-related, or technical) and the response of the police officer to the youth (i.e., verbal/written warning, formal caution, Crown caution, referral to Community Program Officer or directly to services, charges recommended, or other). No significant difference between YID and non-YID youth was found with respect to the category of index offence,  $\chi^2(4) = 7.60, p = .107$ . As expected, a significant difference was found between groups in regards to the response of the police officer to the case,  $\chi^2(7) = 151.08, p < .001$ , with YID youth most commonly receiving a referral to the Community Program Officer or directly to the YID committee (70.0%) and non-YID youth most commonly receiving charges recommended for their actions (42.0%). Interestingly, some of the non-YID group also received police responses of either “Verbal/Written Warning” (23%) or “No Further Action Required” (18%); these were the typical outcomes documented by police when the complainant or victim of the offence did not want to press charges against the youth. See Table 3 for a comparison of police contact outcome of YID and non-YID youth.

### **Recidivism.**

To examine the rates of re-contact with the RCMP, Chi Square analyses were used. In the overall sample, 71% of youth had at least one re-contact event with RCMP during the study timeframe. This rate was similar for the YID (70%) and non-YID (72%) groups,  $\chi^2(1) = .097, p = .755$ , indicating that the majority of both groups had new contact with the RCMP subsequent to the initial contact. Chi Square tests indicated that significantly more males (78.5%) reoffended than females (52.9%) for

YID youth,  $\chi^2(2) = 7.36, p = .025$ . Similarly, Chi Square tests revealed that significantly more males (78.5%) reoffended compared to females (57.1%) in the non-YID group,  $\chi^2(1) = 5.90, p = .015$ .

The frequency of re-contact with the RCMP was generally high even among Low risk youth (64.7%), and was similar to that of Medium risk youth (64.9%). Although High risk youth were the most likely to have subsequent contact with the RCMP (82.1%), this rate did not statistically differ from that of Low and Medium risk youth,  $\chi^2(2) = 2.86, p = .239$ .

With respect to the type of recidivism events committed by the overall sample, the majority of new contacts pertained to either nonviolent (46.2%) or violent (33.6%) offences. Interestingly, non-YID youth engaged most frequently in both violent and non-violent offences, whereas YID youth engaged in a wider variety of offences that also included drug-related crimes and sexual offences,  $\chi^2(4) = 9.63, p = .047$  (see Table 4). Chi Square analyses revealed that the category of recidivism event (i.e., violent, nonviolent, sexual, drug-related, technical) did not significantly differ between genders in the YID group,  $\chi^2(4) = 4.95, p = .763$ , nor in the non-YID group,  $\chi^2(4) = 1.61, p = .807$ . Youth of differing risk levels among YID cases were no more likely to commit a certain category of recidivism event (i.e., violent, nonviolent, sexual, drug-related or technical),  $\chi^2(8) = 8.898, p = .351$ .

An ANOVA examining group differences between YID and non-YID youth on the average severity rating of re-contact offences was conducted and resulted in a significant Levene's test,  $F(1, 141) = 4.01, p = .047$ . Subsequently, a Brown-Forsythe  $F$ -ratio was used and revealed a significant difference between groups,  $F(1, 133.83) =$



11.94,  $p = .001$ , with the non-YID group recidivating with offences of a higher severity rating than the YID group. See Table 4 for a summary of recidivism event information, including the average severity rating for the first reoffence events.

A 2 x 2 factorial ANOVA was used to examine the relationship between diversion status (YID youth, non-YID youth) and gender (male, female) on the total number of reoffending events that occurred during the study timeframe. A non-significant Levene's test was obtained,  $F(4, 195) = 1.69, p = .155$ , so the analysis proceeded as planned. The main effect for diversion status was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 195) = 1.26, p = .263$ , indicating that YID ( $M = 3.07, SD = 5.04$ ) and non-YID youth ( $M = 4.15, SD = 5.56$ ) had a similar average number of reoffending events during the study follow-up period. The main effect for gender on the total number of recidivism events was statistically significant,  $F(2, 195) = 3.13, p = .046$ , with males committing a greater number of new offences ( $M = 4.29, SD = 5.31$ ) than females ( $M = 2.36, SD = 5.18$ ) during the follow-up period. The interaction effect of diversion status and gender was nonsignificant,  $F(1, 195) = .65, p = .423$ .

Within the YID group, a 2 x 3 factorial ANOVA was conducted to examine the relationship between risk level and gender on the total number of reoffending events. A significant Levene's test was obtained,  $F(6, 92) = 2.396, p = .034$ , but since there is no robust  $F$  test to combat the violation of the homogeneity of variance assumption for factorial ANOVAs, a more stringent alpha criteria of .01 was used to interpret a significant result. Results for the main effect for risk level were non-significant,  $F(2, 92) = 2.28, p = .108$ , as were the main effect for gender,  $F(2, 92) = .62, p = .539$ , and the interaction between gender and risk level,  $F(2, 92) = .68, p =$

.508. Thus, there was no effect of YID on the volume of new contacts accrued over the follow-up period, regardless of the youth's estimated recidivism risk level.

#### **Time to recidivism.**

To examine the influence of the YID program on time to first recidivism, survival analyses were conducted. Survival analyses are used to test the differences between groups for the occurrence of an event, as well as whether the survival time to the occurrence is affected by some variable of interest (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). For the purposes of the present study, Kaplan-Meier survival analyses were used to describe the proportion of cases within identified groups that survived across time (i.e., non-recidivism). The Kaplan-Meier method is a product-limit method that produces a single statistic (e.g., mean or median) that summarizes the survival time of the population by calculating survival statistics each time a specified event occurs (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Within the present study, two survival analyses were conducted to examine time to recidivism. The first survival curve evaluated whether YID and non-YID youth differed in their time to re-contact with the RCMP. The second examined whether Low, Medium, and High risk groups within the YID youth sample varied in their time to re-contact with RCMP.

A number of limitations to the survival analysis process have been identified by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). The first is the dependent variable itself—time. In order for a survival analysis to be informative, enough time must pass to allow for the specified event to take place. Thus, a maximum 2.5-year timeframe was used in the current dissertation to provide youth with enough time to have a re-contact event with

the RCMP (See Table 1 for mean follow-up time). A second limitation to survival analysis is that it is unable to provide firm causal conclusions unless it is used in a rigorously controlled prospective experimental design. Since the present dissertation is not an experimental design, program effectiveness conclusions will not be solely based on survival analyses and will explore other factors that may have contributed to any group difference or indifference. Right-censored cases, the most common form of missing data in survival analysis statistics, are expected to occur (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). This type of missing data arises when a case “survives” the entire duration of the study and results in an unknown time for the event under examination. There are two situations under which right-censoring occurs, either under the control of the researcher (i.e., pre-determined follow-up end date) or not (i.e., case drops out or cannot be tracked any longer). As noted by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), most survival analysis methods do not distinguish between the types of right-censoring, and as such, the assumption of no systematic differences between groups is likely violated when there are many cases. To address this violation, Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) recommend including covariates that are related to this type of censoring (i.e., covariates related to dropping out).

To explore how well individual variables are able to predict the time to re-contact, a Cox regression method was used after the completion of the Kaplan-Meier survival analyses. A Cox regression method was used over other logistic regression methods because Cox regression contains a provision for censored data, which will likely occur within the present dataset (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Wilson & Hoge, 2013a). Cox regression analyses provide information regarding the size of

contribution of covariates on the survival rate of youth through the production of regression coefficients. Additionally, if a covariate fails to meet statistical significance, and it appears to be as a result of a small sample rather than the treatment effect, then the Cox regression produces hazard ratio that can be examined for descriptive purposes of treatment impact (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Within the present study, the Cox regression was conducted to examine the influence of specific predictor variables, including diversion status (YID youth or non-YID), the age at first contact with RCMP, and gender (male, female), on the time to re-contact with police.

The first Kaplan-Meier survival analysis exploring the time to first reoffence after index offence for YID and non-YID youth revealed no significant difference between groups,  $\chi^2(1) = .161, p = .688$ . The average time to first reoffence for the YID group was 257.90 days ( $SD = 237.38$ , range = 2 – 798 days) and the average time to first reoffence for the non-YID group was 247.47 days ( $SD = 239.86$ , range = 1 – 834 days). See Figure 1 for the graphical representation of this result.

The second Kaplan-Meier survival analysis examined the time to first recidivism event for youth of varying risk levels (Low, Medium, High) within the YID youth cases. Results indicated no significant difference in the time to reoffence as a function of risk level,  $\chi^2(2) = 3.42, p = .181$ . Visual inspection of the graph revealed a slight separation between groups in the predicted direction, with youth in the High risk category reoffending sooner,  $M = 186.83$  days ( $SD = 188.35$ , range 2.00 – 691.00 days), than both the Medium,  $M = 259.96$  days ( $SD = 260.60$ , range 6.00 – 798.00 days), and the Low-risk groups,  $M = 328.50$  ( $SD = 251.67$ , range 5.00 – 797.00 days),

but this difference was not statistically significant. See Figure 2 for the graphical representation of this result.

A follow-up Cox Regression analysis was completed to determine the ability of youth gender, age at first offence, and diversion status to predict the time to first recidivism event. The omnibus test of model coefficients revealed a nonsignificant result,  $\chi^2(1) = 3.23, p = .521$ , indicating that the time to first recidivism event was not affected by diversion status, age of first contact with RCMP, nor gender.

### **Risk-Need-Responsivity adherence.**

The degree of adherence to each RNR principle (Risk, Need, General Responsivity, Specific Responsivity), as well as the overall adherence to the RNR model was investigated. Due to the condition of case record notes, only 15 cases could be coded for General Responsivity and only 25 cases could be coded for Specific Responsivity. Overall adherence to these four coded RNR principles was low, with only 11 of the 90 qualifying cases being categorized as “Some Adherence” (i.e., 3/4 principles met;  $n = 10$ ) or “Full Adherence” (i.e., 4/4 principles met;  $n = 1$ ). “Partial Adherence” was the most common rating (46.7%) with two of the four principles met ( $n = 42$ ).

Chi Square analysis was used to examine the frequencies of overall RNR adherence (None, Slight, Partial, Some, Full) with respect to youth risk level (Low, Medium, High). Results indicated a significant difference between risk levels and adherence to the RNR principles,  $\chi^2(8) = 29.72, p < .001$ , with the Low risk group having higher rates of “Partial Adherence” compared to the Medium and High risk groups (see Table 5). Notably, only 37% of High risk cases were rated as having

“Partial Adherence” or better, indicating that the majority of High risk youth were under-serviced based on available records. As some cell counts were less than 1, and thus, violated an assumption of Chi Square analyses, youth with None or Slight adherence to the RNR model (i.e., less than two RNR principles met) in their case plans were collapsed to create a “Lower Adherence” group ( $n = 37$ ). Youth with Partial, Some, and Full adherence (i.e., two or more RNR principles met) to the RNR model in their case plans were collapsed to create a “Higher Adherence” group ( $n = 53$ ). The Chi Square analysis remained significant,  $\chi^2(2) = 14.76, p = .001$ , with the Low risk group having a higher percentage of cases coded as meeting the Higher Adherence level (86%) than both the Medium (53%) and High (37%) risk groups.

The Risk principle was adhered to in 60.2% of cases. Chi Square analysis was used to examine the frequencies of Risk principle adherence (Met, Not Met) with respect to youth risk level (Low, Medium, High). Results indicated a significant difference between risk levels and adherence to the Risk principle,  $\chi^2(2) = 17.44, p < .001$ , with the Low risk group having higher rates of the Risk principle “Met” (88.9%) as compared to the Medium (58.8%) and High (33.3%) risk groups.

The Need principle was more closely examined with the overall number of criminogenic needs appropriately addressed within youth case plans assessed with respect to gender (male, female) and risk level (Low, Medium, High) in a 2 x 3 factorial ANOVA analysis. A non-significant Levene’s Test was obtained,  $F(5, 67) = 1.30, p = .276$ , indicating the variability in the gender and YLS/CMI:SV categorical variables was approximately equal. No significant main effect for gender was found on the total number of need areas appropriately addressed,  $F(1, 67) = 1.66, p = .202$ ,

but a significant main effect for risk category was found,  $F(2, 67) = 31.94, p < .001$ . Specifically, Tukey post-hoc analyses, at  $p = .05$ , indicated that Low risk youth had a significantly higher mean number of criminogenic needs addressed appropriately (i.e., no need + no intervention or need + intervention = a match), ( $M = 5.78$  matches,  $SD = .95$ ) than both the Medium ( $M = 4.07$  matches,  $SD = 1.63$ ) and High risk youth ( $M = 2.36$  matches,  $SD = 1.81$ ). The Medium risk youth also had a significantly higher mean number of criminogenic needs addressed appropriately than did the High risk group. Thus, High risk youth were the least likely to have their criminogenic needs appropriately targeted with intervention. The interaction term of risk level and gender did not reach the criterion for statistical significance,  $F(2, 67) = 2.26, p = .112$ .

Each criminogenic need area was examined in detail to determine what happened to a need when it was identified as being “present” in the original YLS/CMI:SV intake assessment with the Community Program Officer; specifically, the frequency of identified needs being met with intervention in the case plan was explored. This analysis removes the match coding for criminogenic need areas rated at ‘not present’, as the inclusion of such ‘matches’ has the potential to overinflate adherence ratings. Frequency analysis revealed an overall low match rate for all identified criminogenic needs, with only 32.8% of all identified criminogenic needs being met with adequate intervention. See Table 6 for the percentage of each identified criminogenic need area matched for youth of Low, Medium and High YLS/CMI:SV risk levels. A range of match rates was observed, with Medium risk youth receiving the highest percentage of identified needs met (37.8%), followed by High risk youth (31.1%). Low risk youth had the fewest identified needs matched

(21.2%). The individual needs that received the highest rates of match across risk levels were Personality/Behaviour (47.1%) and Alcohol/Drug Problems (40.5%). The criminogenic need areas with the lowest rates of match across risk levels were No Leisure/Recreation activities (26.4%) and Some Criminal Friends (22.2%).

A 3 x 5 factorial ANOVA was used to examine the effect of youth risk level (Low, Medium, High) and adherence to the RNR model (none, slight, partial, some, full) on the total number of reoffending events. A significant Levene's test was obtained,  $F(11, 45) = 2.512, p = .015$ , indicating a violation of the homogeneity of variances assumption of ANOVA. As no statistical  $F$  test is robust against the violation of homogeneity of variance assumption in factorial ANOVAs, a more stringent alpha level was used to interpret the presence of a significant difference between groups,  $p < .01$ . No significant main effects were observed for either risk level,  $F(2, 45) = .39, p = .679$ , or RNR adherence level,  $F(4, 45) = .44, p = .783$ . The interaction term was also nonsignificant,  $F(5, 45) = .70, p = .624$ . Thus, the total number of reoffending events could not be accounted for by differences in risk level, RNR adherence, nor the combination of these factors.

A Kaplan-Meier survival analysis was conducted to examine the time to first recidivism event for youth with different levels of RNR adherence in their case plans. To increase power, the Lower Adherence and Higher Adherence groups were used. Results indicated no significant difference in the time to reoffence between these two groups,  $\chi^2(1) = 2.19, p = .139$ . Visual inspection of the graph reveals a slight separation between groups in an unexpected direction at approximately 175 days post-index offence, with youth in the Higher Adherence category reoffending sooner,  $M =$



223.44 days ( $SD = 236.29$ , range 2 – 797.00 days), than youth in the Lower Adherence category,  $M = 299.89$  days ( $SD = 248.83$ , range 2.00 – 798.00 days). See Figure 3 for the graphical representation of this result. Notably, the Lower Adherence group had a larger percentage of High risk youth (45.9%) than the Higher Adherence group (18.9%). As such, in accordance with the RNR model, it would be expected that the Higher Adherence group, comprised of mostly Medium and Low risk youth would reoffend at a slower rate.

#### **Level of youth engagement.**

Finally, youth engagement in the diversion process was examined using frequency and Chi Square analyses. Out of the YID youth, only 59 case files had sufficient information to code engagement. Within these 59 cases, 59.3% ( $n = 35$ ) were coded as having “Good Engagement” indicating attendance at most appointments, engagement with service providers, and appearing motivated to change. A further 28.8% ( $n = 17$ ) were coded as having shown “Partial Engagement” with the diversion process, as evidenced by inconsistent attendance at appointments, some evidence of wanting to change, and inconsistent engagement with service providers. The remaining 11.9% ( $n = 7$ ) were coded as showing “No Engagement” in the diversion process. These individuals were noted to have missed many appointments, shown no motivation to change, and demonstrated no engagement with service providers.

Chi Square analysis was used to examine whether the youth risk level (Low, Medium, High) was related to the level of engagement shown toward the diversion process. Results indicated the level of YID engagement (Good Engagement, Partial

Engagement, No Engagement) was not significantly dependent on youth risk level (Low, Medium, High) group,  $\chi^2(4) = 3.30, p = .509$ . However, the sample sizes for some of these level comparisons were small and may limit the ability of the analyses to detect group differences as more than 20% of the cases had a cell value of less than 5. As shown in Table 7, a larger proportion of Low (66.7%) and Medium (64.0%) risk youth were coded as having “Good Engagement” with the diversion process compared to High risk youth (44.4%).

### **YID Qualitative Results**

Given that only one guardian and youth agreed to participate in the client interview portion of the present dissertation, a qualitative case study method was used to report the information obtained from this interview. The interpretive phenomenological lens presented by Saldaña (2009) in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* and the case study result format described by Baxter and Jack (2008) were used to identify and code themes in the interview information and to present the following results. The coding process required multiple reviews of the transcript and session notes to immerse the primary researcher into the meaning of the text and develop thematic codes specific to the youth experience of the YID (e.g., lessons learned from program(s), skills developed, acknowledgement of negative impact of delinquency on self/community). As only one youth agreed to participate in the in-person interview, comprehensive themes surrounding aspects of the YID process could not be obtained. Results were interpreted and contextualized with the following facts: the youth successfully completed YID and reported a positive attitude toward the diversion process at the beginning of the interview. However, this one

youth's experience may not reflect the experience of most youth who are referred to YID and generalizing these perspectives to all youth is not recommended until confirmed by additional data.

Jason<sup>2</sup> came into contact with the RCMP when he was approximately 13 years of age for a drug-related offence. He reported that when police officers spoke to him, they stated that they would not be recommending charges but that the district Community Program Officer would be in contact regarding the YID program. At the time of the intake interview with the Community Program Officer, Jason was administered the YLS/CMI:SV and his score placed him in the Medium risk category based on the present study's categories of risk.

Two main themes emerged during the interview with Jason discussing the process and outcome of his YID experience. The first theme, "Limited Contact" [in this context defined as "brief and not overwhelming"], encompassed both positive and negative aspects within the YID process. On the positive side, there was one meeting with the Community Program Officer at the start of the process, which Jason described as "no big deal" and "a simple ordeal" and stated, "I don't remember it being very long. I think it was about half an hour, 45 minutes, maybe a bit longer than that." In addition, he noted that the meeting was scheduled around his father's work hours, indicating, "it was perfectly set up and scheduled." This reflects that there is an attempt at being flexible with youth and their families about getting them into their first meeting. However, the "Limited Contact" theme was most evident in statements made during the interview, as Jason highlighted some inefficiencies within the YID

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<sup>2</sup> pseudonym.

process. During his initial contact with police officers, Jason said that he was told that the Community Program Officer would contact him within three weeks, but stated, "...I didn't see [the Community Program Officer] until six months later."

Furthermore, Jason reported that this initial meeting with the Community Program Officer was the only meeting that he had with this professional and that he felt there should be more contact with this person throughout the YID process.

I haven't talked to anyone from the RCMP or in the...program, since...over 13 months ago. It would've been nice to have another meeting in that summer.

Like, just kind of a... (e)ven like a quick phone call or something, just check up and see how I'm doing...(w)ithin like about a month or maybe two.

Jason also noted that he was referred to Addictions and Mental Health Services for counselling sessions. He stated that he attended three or four sessions, but after he missed one appointment, there was no follow-up or attempt to reschedule him, and, "I don't know, I just never went again." This perspective reflects challenges with maintaining access to services.

The second theme that emerged from the interview was that of a "Second Chance" [in this context defined as "a fresh start; opportunity to learn from mistake]. Jason described his experience through the YID program as a "reality check" as he had not previously realized that his behaviour could be harmful.

...(B)efore I never realized how it was leading me somewhere bad and that I realized, one, I got caught at school, that like, if I didn't stop right there then I was just going to get in more trouble at home and more trouble at school and more trouble in general. But I figure, instead of getting caught up in all this

drama and trouble... And I didn't want to get myself involved in that, I didn't want my family would get all mad at me, I didn't want to just cause a big...you know...bad situation. So that's kind of when I just stopped and dropped it and kind of left it be.

Jason also repeatedly mentioned the consequences for his future that he was able to avoid by going through the YID program.

So, um, like the lesson it's taught me, is just to stay away from it. Because there's no point because it's going to drag on, and then if I get a criminal record it's going to be there forever and that's just going to kill a lot of job opportunities for me, right? ... I don't see a point ... (T)here's no point in having that drama around or having those issues.

Additionally, Jason mentioned that the program had an effect on his family as well. He reported that going through the program allowed him to build "a little more trust... and a little more faith" into his relationship with his parents and other family members.

In summary, Jason held a generally positive attitude toward the YID process and program. He stated that he believed that it is a good program that is able to help many youth his age to "veer away from trouble." His experience highlighted potentially key procedural deficits, including a lack of follow up or check-ins and only minimal intervention with a Medium risk youth. Nevertheless, his experience and take-away messages appear to reflect the core of the YID program, which is to allow youth the chance to change their behaviour and reflect on the future consequences if their behaviour is to continue.

### **Discussion**

The present dissertation was designed to examine the processes and outcomes of the RCMP Youth Intervention Diversion strategy in the province of New Brunswick. The central aims of the study were to understand which youth come into contact with the RCMP in the province of New Brunswick and, more specifically, which youth were accepted into the diversion process. Additionally, this study sought to explore the outcomes of these YID youth compared to non-YID youth, and to examine adherence to the RNR framework as it was used as a guiding foundation for the YID strategy.

Before discussing the results, it is important to note that the youth case files were not as complete as desired for effective coding of all variables. The majority did not have a completed YLS/CMI risk assessment form or case plan outlining specific referrals to service despite being conferenced by the YID committee and referred to services. Furthermore, many files did not have any information on the type of program youth were referred to, the mode of intervention (i.e., cognitive behavioural therapy) received, the main issues addressed within the intervention, and the criteria used to determine successful intervention completion. In addition, attempts to gather necessary information on intervention programs was unsuccessful, making it difficult to accurately code adherence to General and Specific Responsivity principles. No follow-up risk assessments were completed at the end of the 6-month statute either, which eliminated the opportunity to compare pre-intervention and post-intervention risk assessment scores. However, it is important to note that follow-up risk assessment is not a mandatory procedure under the RCMP YID policy.

With these caveats in mind, the results of the current study found little evidence to suggest an effect of YID involvement on whether youths reoffend, the volume of new police contacts, or the time to recidivism relative to a comparison group of non-YID youth with police contact. New police contact was high (over 70%) for both groups over the follow-up period. In contrast to these objective outcome data, qualitative data obtained from a former YID participant reflected generally supportive views of the YID process. The youth identified challenges and recommendations for change that, if addressed, may enhance the capacity of YID to achieve its goals. Notably, YID did appear to produce a harm reduction effect in that YID youth reoffended by committing less serious antisocial acts than non-YID youth despite having similar index offence severity ratings. Each of these findings is discussed below.

### **Review of Quantitative Results**

To address the first research question of what type of youth come into contact with the RCMP, the study predictions regarding population characteristics were partially supported. More males than females came into contact with police, consistent with previous research on youth and adult offenders (e.g., Jones et al., 2014; Moffitt & Caspi, 2001, Powell et al., 2010; Stephenson, et al., 2014; Vaillancourt, 2010). Additionally, youth of all ages were included in the sample (i.e., 12 to 17 years) and youth who had previously come into contact with the RCMP were not excluded from diversion, as 40% of the sample had previous contact. These statistics are consistent with the YID program mandate, which states that the program is for youth of all ages who come into contact with the law and is not exclusively for first time contact.

Contrary to expectations, approximately one third of the YID youth sample were rated as High risk to reoffend on the YLS/CMI:SV, with the remaining amount of the sample divided equally between Low and Medium risk youth. The RCMP diversion policy does not narrowly define the target population for the intervention and diversion strategy in terms of acceptable risk level (RCMP, 2009). Therefore, the inclusion of High risk youth is acceptable in terms of the policy. However, as results from the present dissertation highlighted, the level of intervention and amount of contact with the High risk youth was insufficient to meet this risk level in accordance with the RNR framework. Diversion programs that accept High risk individuals into programming should have a corresponding increase in service and supervision intensity in order to maximize the reduction of criminogenic needs and overall risk level, in accordance with the RNR model (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a).

Defining the population of a diversion program is one of the key implementation steps and may vary from area to area within a specific policing zone, as a “one size fits all” approach is typically unsuccessful (Sullivan et al., 2007). In considering what population is going to be targeted, the types of community programming available to address the circumstances of the target population is imperative. Specifically, in accordance with the RNR model, intervention resources for Medium risk individuals are typically more intense than is required for Low risk individuals but less intense than those required for High risk individuals (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a). If a program that is developed to target the criminogenic needs of Medium risk individuals begins to accept Low and High risk individuals, then there is a danger of providing inappropriate services to those individuals. Mismatch of service



intensity and risk level can actually lead to an increase in an individual's risk to reoffend (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a; Andrews & Dowden, 2007).

When examining the index offences that brought the youth into contact with the RCMP, no significant differences emerged on the number of offences, the severity rating of the offence, or the category of the offence. These results indicate that the YID and non-YID youth were adequately matched for comparison of recidivism rates during the follow-up period. The outcomes of contact with the RCMP were consistent with the defining characteristic of these two groups of youth: the YID group was most often referred to the Community Program Officer or a community agency directly and the non-YID group was often recommended for charges. An unexpected finding emerged in that a large number of non-YID youth received only a warning and/or no further action was warranted. A review of these raw data indicated that these instances came about as a result of the complainant not wanting to press charges against the youth.

Despite the hypotheses that YID youth would demonstrate lower rates of reoffending and lowered risk levels, the non-supportive findings of the current study are consistent with previous research (e.g., Haines et al., 2015; Schwalbe et al., 2012). The rate of reoffending was higher than expected (YID 70%; non-YID 72%), but these rates are not far above those that have been previously reported. For example, Peterson-Badali and colleagues (2015) observed an overall recidivism rate of 59% in a sample of justice-involved youth. Consistent with other studies (e.g., Peterson-Badali, Skilling & Haqanee, 2015), more males reoffended than females in both the YID and non-YID group. Of note, the severity of the first recidivism event was in the expected

direction, with YID youth committing less severe offences than non-YID youth. This latter finding may be evidence of the beginnings of a reduction in risk level; although most youth remained criminally active, YID youth were doing so in less serious ways. This could be considered a step in the direction of “harm reduction” and a positive result of the YID process.

Contrary to expectations, the time to first re-contact with RCMP did not differ between YID and non-YID youth. Furthermore, time to first reoffence was not predicted by age at first offence, gender, or diversion status. This result is contrary to previous research, which has demonstrated that, although the rate of reoffending may be similar, YID youth typically display longer periods of desistance than control youth (Haines et al., 2015). This result may have been affected by the low adherence to the RNR model for case management, as both YID and non-YID youth may not have received the services that would best address their criminogenic needs (Andrews & Bonta 2010a, Bonta, Ruge, Scott, Bourgon, & Yessine, 2008). This underserving could include the limited availability of appropriate community services (Schwalbe et al., 2012). The more support and appropriate level of intervention available for diverted youth, the more likely a program is to be successful at reducing criminogenic need levels and lowering the overall risk to reoffend, consistent with the RNR model. If the services available are not matched to the intervention intensity level required, then a reduction in future criminal contact would not be expected even though a youth was diverted away from the formal criminal justice system. Additionally, the content and quality of the supervisory relationship with Community Program Officers and the youth (and youth’s family) was not explored in this study. However, it should be

noted that focusing professional-client meeting discussions on criminogenic need areas is associated with lower rates of recidivism as well as longer time to first recidivism event (Bonta et al., 2008; 2011). RNR implementation research with probation officers demonstrated that these topics are rarely the content of supervisory meetings (Bonta et al., 2008). To investigate this aspect of the Community Program Officer-youth relationship, in-session recordings would need to be implemented and coded for emergent themes to ascertain the frequency and duration of time with which these criminogenic needs are discussed relative to noncriminogenic needs.

Rates of adherence to the Risk, Need, and Responsivity principles were relatively low, consistent with what was predicted. Although not the most positive result for the program, these results are consistent with previous research in community corrections supervision settings with youth and adults, where generally low RNR adherence rates are found in practice (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a; Bonta, et al., 2008; Vieira et al., 2009; Vincent et al., 2012). Within the present study, half of the criminogenic need areas of Medium and High risk youth had low match rates with appropriate interventions, including school/employment needs, criminal friends, no leisure/recreation activities, and antisocial attitudes. Furthermore, only a very small percentage of High risk youth (3.7%) were found to have case files that adhered fully to the RNR principles. Importantly, although not meeting the needs of higher risk cases, the results of the present study suggest that the YID program is not over-intervening with Low risk youth. Over-intervening has been shown to increase their risk to reoffend (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a).

Multiple factors could influence adherence to the Risk and Need principles, including extraneous factors like the Community Program Officers' workload, caseload, and the capacity of community resources. These factors would contribute to the amount of contact a youth receives from the Community Program Officer. Additionally, low adherence results may partially be explained by previous research findings that have identified personal confidence in risk assessment tools, monitoring of tool use, and how recent the training was, as affecting whether practitioners base decisions on risk assessment results (Miller & Maloney, 2013).

Due to the condition of reviewed case files, the Responsivity principle could not be thoroughly examined in the present study. It is unclear if general and specific responsivity factors were considered but not documented or whether inadequate attention was provided to these factors when diversion case plans were developed. However, the lack of documentation of the Responsivity principle is not out of the ordinary within RNR research. This principle has received the least attention within the research field (Hubbard, 2007) and it may be that it is less concrete than the Risk and Need principles and, therefore, harder to document and/or code (Haqanee, Peterson-Badali, & Skilling, 2015; Polaschek, 2012). Failure to document may be due to a number of reasons, including high caseload demands and a desire to reduce time spent on paperwork in favour of spending more time on managing and assisting youth. Documentation of responsivity factors also may be more difficult for Community Program Officers with limited exposure to the type of rehabilitation advocated for within the RNR model and other evidence-based practices (e.g., cognitive behavioural interventions, social learning). If Community Program Officers are not familiar with

the characteristics of programs that have demonstrated effects on reducing recidivism, then they may be referring youth to programs that are not as effective at reducing recidivism as would be desired. Furthermore, community-based programs would be better able to be assessed for compliance with the General Responsivity principle if they completed self-studies demonstrating the effect of their program on a variety of youth outcomes. Unfortunately, many community-based programs lack the funding, research knowledge, and manpower to complete such a self-study. As a result, Community Program Officers may continue to refer to programs that they usually do (Taxman & Marlowe, 2006) when the outcomes of these programs may be neutral or even negative with respect to a youth's risk level.

It is encouraging that the RCMP YID strategy is using the YLS/CMI:SV as a first line screening assessment tool to categorize youth risk levels. However, the full assessment tool, the YLS/CMI, provides more specific details as to which criminogenic needs should be addressed within the case plan, as well as how intensive these services need to be to reduce the risk of recidivism. More frequent implementation of the full YLS/CMI tool than in current practice would be more appropriate for case plan development. This full tool highlights specific difficulties in the youth's life that are tied to their criminal risk level, and allows for more effective allocation of resources to reduce the risk by targeting criminogenic needs relevant to each case. As such, Community Program Officers would be better able to refer youth to appropriate programs (Makarios & Latessa, 2013).

A number of factors likely contribute to the amount of referrals made to YID and the subsequent number of criminogenic needs addressed in a youth case plan. For

example, the availability of services within the community focused on specific criminogenic needs limits the ability of a case manager to find services to address these needs (Haqanee et al., 2015). The waitlists associated with specific services may have also affected access to services within the 6-month statute of limitations allotted for diversion by the *Youth Criminal Justice Act (2002)*. Additionally, there are some criminogenic needs that are more commonly identified because they are easier to objectively recognize than others (e.g., education/employment, criminal peers, and substance abuse are more obvious target needs compared to antisocial orientation or procriminal attitudes; Luong & Wormith, 2011). Lack of clarity as to what is reflected in a criminogenic need domain and how best to address it would result in youth being referred to inappropriate services. Moreover, needs that are “easier” to link to services (e.g., substance use results in referral to substance use treatment) may get priority even when those needs are not the most pressing in the individual’s profile.

Another reason that could account for the low number of criminogenic needs matched with services is that there are some noncriminogenic needs that become prioritized over criminogenic needs, like mental health, housing arrangements or motivation to change (Haqanee et al., 2015; Peterson-Badali et al., 2015). Addressing these needs would allow youth to attain greater stability and engagement in the process, potentially increasing their ability to engage in the interventions (Peterson-Badali et al., 2015). However, it is important to remember that numerous studies have demonstrated that dynamic criminogenic risk factors are better predictors of recidivism over and above criminal history and are important to address as well if one truly wants to reduce future criminal behaviour (Makarios & Latessa, 2013; Peterson-

Badali et al., 2015). Therefore, the referral process may have been successful and the case plan may have attempted to address a youth's needs in theory, but difficulties with accessing services combined with inappropriate referrals to noncriminogenic-focused services, and failure to prioritize high level criminogenic needs in these case plans each limit program impact on recidivism reduction goals.

It may be difficult to address all needs for a single youth; especially many issues are influencing the presence of criminal behaviour, within a diversion context as articulated in the RCMP's YID. Setting too many targets for a 6-month diversion process may overwhelm both the youth and his/her family, and it may be unrealistic to expect dramatic gains in such a short period of time, especially in higher risk cases with complex needs. To resolve such a situation, Bourgon and colleagues (2011) recommend using the "Keystone Approach", which targets "high impact" criminogenic needs first: procriminal attitudes/beliefs, youth relationships, and lifestyle choices. If intervention services are directed at these needs, then it will typically cause a ripple effect into other criminogenic need areas (Bourgon, Gutierrez & Astiton, 2011; Haqanee et al., 2015). Taxman (2006) proposed a similar approach: in the instance of multiple criminogenic needs being identified, priority of interventions should be given to the dimensions of a person's functionality that are strongly associated with future criminal behaviour – the "criminal drivers" (i.e., the people, places and things that can affect the likelihood of future criminal behaviour).

Finally, when looking at engagement in the diversion process, there were many instances in which the documentation contained in the case file was insufficient to code this variable. Of the files that could be coded for engagement level, just over half

the sample was noted as attending most appointments, appearing engaged with service providers, and demonstrating some motivation to change. However, close to 40% of youth were only partially engaged or not engaged at all with the YID process.

Previous research has demonstrated that the more engaged an offender is, the more observed change in risk scores (Whittington et al., 2015).

This engagement with the process could be altered by a number of factors. One of the most salient factors that could affect a youth's level of engagement with the RCMP's YID process would be the youth's previously held beliefs and attitude towards the police. As outlined by Stewart and colleagues (2014), youth perceptions of police officers are influenced by a number of factors including age, gender, delinquency, and the nature of police contacts. Research examining the attitudes of youth during interactions with police indicates that minority youth appear to see police officers in a more negative light (e.g., dangerous, biased, controlling and ineffective; Nordberg, Crawford, Praetorius, & Smith Hatcher, 2015). However, it has been demonstrated that youth attitudes towards police are malleable and can change over time if a youth perceives police officers as presenting themselves in an unbiased manner (Stewart, Morris, & Weir, 2014).

The lack of follow-up risk assessment data in the present study prevented conclusions from being drawn about the effect of youth engagement on their risk level. Use of follow-up risk assessments or even follow-up meetings with youth present an opportunity for Community Program Officers and community service providers to implement skills that would enhance an individual's engagement with intervention services and motivation to change; specifically, through the use of



Motivational Interviewing skills (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Motivational Interviewing is a strategy that elicits the client's own intrinsic motivations to make behaviour changes. There has been preliminary research support for its effectiveness with forensic populations (Austin, Williams, & Kilgour, 2011; Harper & Hardy, 2000; Miller & Rose, 2010). At present, however, given that adherence to the RNR model was quite low, overall, for Medium and High risk youth and because youth engagement in the diversion process was also lower than expected, interventions within the present study timeframe would not be expected to have much influence on recidivism rates of YID youth.

The topic of real-world implementation of the RNR principles has been the focus of discussion for a number of years as the RNR model appears easy to follow on paper; however, it is an intricate process that involves a number of steps and individuals. A number of barriers to full adherence to the model have been raised in previous research studies, ranging from personal considerations held by the assessor to organizational support for the process (e.g., Haas & DeTardo-Bora, 2009; Krysik & LeCroy, 2002; Miller & Maloney, 2013; Schwalbe, 2004). With respect to risk assessment, there are both individual and organizational components that alter compliance rates with risk assessment protocols. In a national survey of frontline probation staff in the United States, approximately half indicated that they completed risk assessment tools for the purpose of informing their decisions regarding probationary requirements (Miller & Maloney, 2013). The other half of the sample indicated that they completed the risk assessment tool as their offices required it but they did not use the results when developing case plans. Instead, they opted to use

their clinical judgment (Miller & Maloney, 2013). Individual belief in the assessment tool itself is an essential component for its proper completion and effective use to inform case management decisions (Miller & Maloney, 2013). Non-adherence to assessment protocols can arise in many forms, including simply not completing the tool or completing the tool carelessly by omitting many items, which leads to an invalid assessment and/or an artificially low risk score (Krysiak & LeCroy, 2002; Miller & Maloney, 2013; Schwalbe, 2004). This tendency was observed during the present study as a number of YLS/CMI:SV forms were invalid due to too many items being omitted. In a survey, probation officers indicated that they tend not to have enough information to provide an accurate answer to the yes/no style of question for the risk assessment tools and, therefore, choose to omit the item as opposed to coding it potentially incorrectly (Krysiak & LeCroy, 2002). This may have been the case with Community Program Officers in the YID program. Whatever the reasoning for omitting items, it is likely that the practice impacted the predictive validity of the YLS/CMI:SV in the present study. The tool has demonstrated adequate predictive validity for general, violent, and non-violent recidivism in previous research with an Asian youth population (Chu et al., 2014) despite its original purpose of identifying individuals who would benefit from further risk assessment. Within the present study, with a Canadian sample, the YLS/CMI:SV produced only a small effect size for general recidivism. This would suggest that its use within the YID procedure should be limited to its original purpose of pinpointing which individuals would be best suited for more in-depth risk assessment with the full YLS/CMI measure.

Another aspect of non-adherence to risk assessment protocols takes the form of manipulating the assessment tool after it was scored properly, by the administrator “adding” extra points because s/he felt an important area of consideration was not assessed or considered in the final score (Schwalbe, 2004). Tool manipulation may occur because the administrator may want to ensure that the client qualifies for specific services (Schwalbe, 2004). Many recidivism risk assessment tools focus on factors that have been linked empirically to future offending behaviour (i.e., criminogenic factors) and consider only the presence of these factors in the calculation of the final risk score. Although other individual characteristics (i.e., noncriminogenic factors) are important to consider when planning appropriate treatment and rehabilitation services, they have not been linked empirically to an increase in reoffending behaviour and, as such, these factors are not to be considered when rating an individual’s likelihood of reoffending. Within the present sample, it is unknown whether the YLS/CMI:SV engaged in this type of behaviour, as no notes were made on the measure identifying this behaviour. Regardless of the specific reason for doing so, administrators may alter the rating of criminogenic factors to incorporate the presence of noncriminogenic factors and the resulting risk score is inflated by this practice and does not reflect accurately the individual’s recidivism risk.

Finally, the last example of noncompliance is the non-adherence to tool recommendations. This could be seen as disregarding resulting risk scores or only partially using the information in case management planning (Miller & Maloney, 2013; Schwalbe, 2004). This may be evidenced in a pattern of using clinical override options more often than not which has been found to substantially compromise the

risk tool's predictive validity when using actuarial tools (Schmidt, Sinclair & Thomasdóttir, 2016). However, it is important to note that some external factors would factor into this type of noncompliance (e.g., availability of services). In the present sample, this behaviour is not likely to have been observed as there is no official clinical override segment on the YLS/CMI:SV. It is possible that the Community Program Officers used clinical judgment to increase the risk level of a youth but did not document the behaviour.

In terms of management characteristics that impact compliance, ongoing monitoring and auditing of risk tool use was noted to increase and ensure proper risk assessment tool compliance (Haas & DeTardo-Bora, 2009). Furthermore, ensuring that the training provided to risk assessment administrators includes components on the utility of the tool and the impact that noncompliance with the standardized protocol can have on both the case plan and the offender is strongly suggested (Haas & DeTardo-Bora, 2009; Miller & Maloney, 2013; Schwalbe, 2004). Finally, having the head of the organization demonstrate confidence in the risk assessment tool has also been noted as a method for increasing compliance with the measure (Haas & DeTardo-Bora, 2009).

After identifying risk level and criminogenic needs through assessment, finding community services agencies that can receive referrals is the next set of barriers to effective risk reduction. When referring a youth to community services, the amount of services in the area to accommodate referrals from diversion programming will vary as these services likely still need to accept community referrals as well. Furthermore, the types of services may vary by jurisdiction, meaning that some areas are left

without a service to address specific criminogenic needs. Finally, institutional and community support for the diversion programming, including the body running the program (i.e., RCMP head officers) and the community programs receiving referrals (i.e., intake workers, frontline service providers, management staff), need to be cultivated to have an effective diversion system.

### **Review of Qualitative Results**

The present dissertation is one of the first studies to involve direct feedback from a youth program participant in the diversion literature. Qualitative research allows for the unique opportunity to explore typically under-researched areas with greater detail (Haqanee et al., 2015). As the interview portion of the present dissertation took place with only a single youth from a single diversion program, it cannot generate definitive results as thematic saturation was unlikely to have been achieved. However, the single case provides insight into how the process is experienced by the target population for whom it was developed and contributes to the knowledge on both the particular program as well as the diversion process as a whole (Flyvberg, 2006).

Consistent with study predictions, the youth interviewed presented with an overall positive view of the diversion process. This was consistent with previous research on youth attitudes towards diversion and teen courts (Bright, Young, Bessaha, & Falls, 2015; Sherman et al., 2005). Specifically, the Second Chance theme raised by the youth participant echoes the results of a study with teen court participants (Bright et al., 2015). This theme highlights the ability for diversion processes and other alternatives to the traditional criminal justice system to provide

youth with opportunities to learn from their mistakes while simultaneously avoiding negative consequences experienced by those who proceed through the court process (e.g., charges, exposure to more antisocial individuals). Additionally, the youth participant in the present study also described the YID process as providing him with the opportunity to rebuild trust with his family. This demonstrates the far-reaching effects that a diversion program can have – impacting the family system as a whole and not just focusing on the individual youth involved in the program.

Importantly, the interviewee identified some procedural deficits in the YID program (e.g., more contact with program co-ordinators and service providers; follow-up to ensure referrals are meeting the needs of the youth) that are addressed in more detail in the following section.

### **Recommendations for YID Program Improvement**

The overall results of the present dissertation did not produce the strong results in favour of diversion as expected. However, considering the information provided by the youth participant interview in combination with the quantitative results, there are a number of recommendations for program improvement in order to facilitate the standardization of the procedures and processes of the RCMP YID program in the province of New Brunswick. These recommendations may enhance the effect of the YID and better help it to achieve its goals of risk reduction and non-criminalization of youth. The results were provided to the RCMP in the form of a written report submitted in April 2016 as well as an in-person meeting on September 7, 2016.

#### **Recommendations for use of risk assessment instruments.**

Attention needs to be drawn to the use of the risk assessment tools, as the completion of these measures is what informs the diversion programming referral process. The present study highlighted instances of invalid YLS/CMI:SV use as a result of too many items omitted, which may have contributed to the low predictive validity of the tool. A zero substitution rule was implemented for items that were omitted for the present study to use the measures for data analysis. However, this procedure is not condoned for use in real-world risk assessment as the YLS/CMI:SV is meant to indicate which individuals could benefit from further, more in-depth assessments. Invalid results on the screening measure are not useful in determining who proceeds to the next assessment stage.

Implementing a mentorship process for the use of the YLS/CMI:SV, or creating a document for where to find the information that could assist in coding criminogenic need areas (i.e., what information needs to be considered to score a criminogenic need as 'present'), would be useful. Furthermore, once a score on the screening measure is obtained, the next step is to complete the full YLS/CMI measure. The danger of using only a screening tool to assess risk is that the rater is not gaining a thorough view of the individual being assessed. The screening tool's purpose is to distinguish who should be seen for further assessment. Supplementing the YLS/CMI:SV with clinical judgment is also not an acceptable practice, as clinical judgment has been consistently shown to overestimate risk (e.g., Oleson, VanBenschoten, Robinson, & Lowenkamp, 2011). In an examination of probation officers, Oleson et al. (2011) observed that actuarial assessment was approximately 13% more accurate than clinical judgment in predicting general recidivism and 17%

more accurate in predicting violent recidivism. Using a risk assessment tool as it was designed was found to produce more consistent and accurate decisions regarding the probation requirements for offenders of varying risk assessment levels (Oleson et al., 2011). The risk assessment process following the RNR model could be better conceptualized and presented to frontline personnel as the beginning of a process toward an individualized treatment plan to reduce the reoffending of a specific individual and not just as an end in itself (Taxman, 2006).

It is recommended that the RCMP implement a cut-off score for proceeding onto the full measure to ensure that youth who are diverted into the program receive a more thorough assessment, which will form the foundation for a more individualized case plan development. The RCMP could then use the resulting YLS/CMI score as a criterion for admission into the service referral portion of the program. At this point, a specific cut-off score is not offered by the primary researcher as the score would be related to the risk level(s) the RCMP and their community partners choose as the target population for their YID program.

As the policy reads, there is no identified risk level for inclusion or exclusion from the YID program. Therefore, the RCMP and its community partners need to be able to provide services of varying intensity to be consistent with the RNR framework. As such, there are two paths that the RCMP could take moving forward with the YID strategy. The first would require the YID committee to state explicitly what risk level(s) they are targeting with the diversion program (e.g., Low or Medium risk youth). This would increase the consistency of those accepted into the program and allow for community programs to be prepared for the type of youth referred to them



(i.e., have sufficient resources to provide the intensity of services and evidence-based interventions for this specific group of youth). Alternatively, the RCMP along with YID committee members could develop three separate branches of the YID strategy – each with specific referral agencies designed to provide interventions at the intensity required by the youth’s risk level. This option would allow the YID strategy to continue to divert youth of a variety of risk levels, but also be able to provide interventions best suited for youth to maximize reductions in risk level. However, this three-tiered YID system would require up to triple the resources from both the RCMP and its community partners to ensure the integrity of the YID process, and adherence to the RNR model, are maintained (e.g., ensuring enough time for all documentation to be completed, having enough Community Program Officers to maintain appropriate amounts of face-to-face contact with youth of differing risk levels), which may not be a feasible or sustainable investment for organizations.

It is important to highlight the research indicating that the risk assessment and more definite inclusion criteria may be considered null if there are not high quality services in the community with which criminogenic needs can be addressed (Austin, 2006). Therefore, it would be helpful for YID committee members to be familiar with each community partner’s service provision theoretical orientation and/or approach to intervention to ensure that the programs to which youth are referred adhere to the General and Specific Responsivity principles. Programs that have a social learning or cognitive-behavioural orientation are the most effective with justice-involved individuals as these approaches to intervention use techniques (e.g., modeling, reinforcement, role playing, skill building, cognitive restructuring of emotions and

automatic thoughts) that can be rehearsed repeatedly to establish new thought and behaviour patterns (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a).

**Recommendations for alterations to YID procedure.**

Implementing a follow-up assessment process at the end of the 6-month statute and/or end-of-service provision is recommended. Follow-up risk assessments allow the assessor to gather information about what changes, if any, have taken place over the course of the intervention time period. This type of information would inform decisions about whether youth should be encouraged to continue to stay in programming, if possible, as well as provide some information as to whether the program had any effect on decreasing identified criminogenic needs. Additionally, the resulting risk score of re-assessment in adult offenders has shown to be more predictive of recidivism than the pre-intervention risk score (Labrecque, Smith, Lovins, & Latessa, 2014). Re-assessment at the end of the diversion process would provide the RCMP with a quick indication of the influence of diversion upon the specific youth and allow for continued self-evaluation to take place in real-time. Beyond immediate feedback on individual youth progress and risk for recidivism, a follow-up risk assessment policy would allow for an information database to be developed for future statistical analyses to examine the aggregate change in risk level over time for youth diverted away from the criminal justice system – potentially providing more support for the YID process.

The content of a re-assessment session could also consist of a number of questionnaires including an “exit survey” for parents and youth seeking opinions about the services received and whether or not there were barriers impeding

completion of referrals. If the RCMP were to have this information gathered for each youth diverted through the YID process, then the organization would be able to receive feedback quickly from key stakeholders about the parts that are working for the diversion process as well as areas in which there could be improvement to increase compliance to referrals. To complement the youth/guardian portion of the follow-up assessment, YID committee members could also participate in a semi-annual or annual re-examination of YID processes and outcomes. This practice would increase the discussion among community agencies and the RCMP as to what processes are helpful and which are not as helpful within the specific districts, and subsequent adjustments to the procedures could be made.

With respect to the documentation of the Community Program Officers' contact with youth, standardization of the type of documentation required is recommended as well as where the documentation is held. The present study highlighted a lack of documentation of the full YLS/CMI in addition to case notes outlining responsivity considerations, youth engagement with the process, and concluding comments for each file. Standardized concluding comments could describe the level of engagement observed from the youth and/or family (e.g., attendance to sessions, amount/quality of participation in sessions, rate of homework completion), information on referral program completion/non-completion received from service providers, responsivity factors that may need to be considered for any future contact with the youth, and other comments that the Community Program Officer deems necessary for concluding the file. Having a workflow or worksheet for Community Program Officers outlining the steps and decision making processes throughout the

diversion process may aid in increasing documentation adherence. Having more standardized documentation processes would make any future self-evaluation, or external evaluation, faster and easier, resulting in better monitoring of the YID process, and a faster turnaround to make necessary adjustments to the processes to improve effectiveness. Such record keeping is useful for providing feedback to youth and families on progress in YID, and helpful to other Community Program Officers who may receive a subsequent referral to YID for the same youth.

Given that the diversion process is under the jurisdiction of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, and is a process used to keep youth out of the criminal justice system, the location of the documentation should be outlined by the RCMP so that all individuals involved in the diversion process (e.g., community agency representatives, Community Program Officers, police officer with initial contact with youth) have access to the needed information. However, the RCMP will need to ensure that individuals who are not involved in the process do not have access to confidential information (e.g., other employees within a community agency).

Another important aspect of the YID process is the timing of events. As the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* imposes a statute of limitations of 6-months after a youth has been diverted, meaning that all processes and referrals related to diversion need to be completed within 6 months of the index event, priority needs to be placed on processing youth through diversion in a timely manner. To address this issue, it is recommended that delays be minimized when contacting youth and their guardians to set up the initial interviews; this may be achieved by setting a time limit to which all Community Program Officers must adhere (i.e., within two weeks of initial police

contact with youth). Additionally, by holding regular YID committee meetings (e.g., biweekly or monthly), delays due to scheduling conflicts would be less likely. Within these regular meetings, updates on the progress of diverted youth would be shared more frequently, allowing for timely responses to any issues as they arise. With improved efficiency, there is a possibility that more time could be allocated to following up with youth who are going through the diversion process, which could have a subsequently positive impact on the youth's engagement with the programming.

Finally, if time and resources permit, randomized case file audits are recommended (Haas & DeTardo-Bora, 2009). The procedure would involve an individual(s) from the Crime Reduction Unit of J Division Headquarters of the RCMP randomly selecting a diverted youth case file from each district and reviewing the file for process documentation and completed risk assessment measures. This procedure would allow individuals overseeing the YID strategy to be aware of case file conditions immediately, to ensure that programming policy and procedures are being followed to maximize program effectiveness, and to create awareness of any time delays that take place. Having a case file audit process implemented at regular intervals throughout the year would also allow for faster identification of difficulties within the process and subsequently faster adjustment of policy and procedures to address any problems that arise.

The successful implementation of these recommendations will likely be affected by the amount of financial and personnel resources available within the different districts. However, as summarized by Coccozza and colleagues (2005) and

Hodges and colleagues (2011), successful diversion programs will use standardized assessment measures, have a directory of community resources available, have continuous and open contact among agencies and representatives, offer a continuation of services after the diversion program statute ends, and have a systematic process to track youth progress throughout diversion in an effort to acquire data for future evaluations. If the RCMP is able to implement these suggested recommendations, the YID program in New Brunswick will possess many of those identified features of successful diversion programs.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The present dissertation has a number of strengths. The current evaluation included a matched control group of non-YID youth. Although some of the control group sample were not actually processed through the traditional criminal justice system, because their victims did not want to press charges, these individuals were released, they did not have any contact with a Community Program Officer, they were not referred to any community services and, therefore, they did not receive any known interventions. Despite the archival nature of the objective data used in the present study, this research had a prospective intention in that it followed youth for 2.5 years after initial police contact. The length of follow-up period allowed for an examination of the longer-term behaviour of youth processed through the diversion program.

As noted by Miller and Maloney (2013), there is a dearth of research examining how frontline staff use risk assessment instruments. The present study directly adds to this literature by speaking to RNR adherence in the field within the context of diversion. A lack of information and documentation found in the case files provides

further evidence for difficulties with use of assessment instruments in real-world settings.

As previously mentioned, the present dissertation began to examine the experiences and opinions of youth participants in the diversion process. Typically, diversion program reviews include surveys and interviews with either or both facilitators and community agency representatives (e.g., Joudo, 2008; McInerney et al., 2013; Schwalbe & Maschi, 2012). These methods are informative, but miss the perspective of one of the most important components of the diversion process – the consumer. Understanding the diversion participant’s experience of the process allows for specific alterations to be made to increase motivation to engage with the diversion programming, which may affect an individual’s risk for recidivism. Although participation in this particular part of the study was limited to only one respondent, both positive feedback and constructive criticism points were reflected within interview content and thus, a balanced perspective on the YID process was able to be obtained.

There are some limitations to the present dissertation that also should be noted. Specifically, when coding index and re-contact events, the present dissertation was limited to the information contained in the RCMP electronic database. Crimes not reported to police could not be captured, but given the high frequency of re-contact in the sample, the influence of these events is likely small. Furthermore, it is possible that any contact youth may have had with other policing agencies (i.e., municipal police forces) would not be captured in the present study as the RCMP electronic database tracks contact with the RCMP exclusively. Although a possibility, it is

unlikely to have a large effect on the present results as youth were sampled from areas where the RCMP were the primary policing agency and offending out of jurisdiction would likely constitute a small proportion of offending behaviour. In addition, the dissertation relied on the secondary use of data of official records, which likely played a role in the amount of missing data that was observed (Haerle, 2016). The amount of offence and demographic information collected at the time of the index offence needed to be sufficient for the needs of the frontline police officer, which was not the same level of detail that is desired for research purposes. It is unlikely that the amount of missing data observed in the RCMP records is unique, and similar amounts of missing data would be expected in another police organization's database. This is because frontline officers, regardless of geographic location or police agency employer, collect information that is necessary to their cases and are typically not collecting other, peripheral variables.

A second limitation of the current dissertation is the use of "subject of complaint" as the criteria for an index offence and a follow-up recidivism event. By using this category there is the possibility of overestimating criminal contact because this criterion did not capture whether an actual charge was laid. However, this category of contact with police had to be used because the criterion for inclusion into the study as the entrance criteria for the YID program is to have contact with police with enough evidence to support charges being recommended against the youth but not be processed through the criminal justice system (i.e., not recommended for charges to be laid). Additionally, to compare the same types of behaviour and contact with police with the initial contact information, a "subject of complaint" contact was



required to define a recidivism event. To have a comparable control group, the non-YID youth also had to be the “subject of complaint” for an offence event to compare with youth in YID.

Third, it is possible that the number of diversion cases obtained for the present study was insufficient to obtain the power necessary to find a significant effect. Specifically, in the larger factorial ANOVA analyses, there may have been an insufficient number of cases to find a significant medium effect size. Statistical power is the probability of rejecting the null hypotheses (i.e., there is no difference between the means of YID and non-YID youth on the total number of reoffending events) when the alternative hypothesis is true (i.e., a significant difference exists between the means of the YID and non-YID group on the total number of reoffending events; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Post hoc power analyses were not conducted, as there are strong opinions against such procedures in the literature (e.g., Hoenig & Heisey, 2001) because the values entered into the calculation come from the study that produced nonsignificant results and thus, the information used is that which is being questioned.

Compromise power analysis (Erdfelder, 1984) is used when a finite number of participants are available. Power is calculated by inputting an estimated effect size (obtained from the research literature), the number of available participants, and the ratio of errors ( $\beta/\alpha$ ). In this instance, the ratio of  $\beta/\alpha$  used was 1, indicating that the probability of finding a Type II error was equally as important as finding a Type I error (Cohen, 1988). Following this procedure, the estimated power ranged between 73% and 79% for all analyses, except for the 2 x 3 factorial ANOVA procedures, which had 63% power. However, even if sufficient power levels were reached, it is

unlikely that significant group differences would be found in the present study. There were a number of difficulties with adherence to the RNR model observed in the present sample, which has been associated with little to no effect on reducing recidivism in previous research (e.g., Andrews & Bonta, 2010a).

Fourth, the RCMP policy governing the YID strategy in 2012 did not require any follow-up risk assessment at the end of the diversion time period and no policy changes have been made to date to address this concern. The lack of post-intervention information limited the present study's ability to examine thoroughly the YID program because no comment could be made about any risk or criminogenic need changes that did or did not take place over the course of time that youth were involved in the YID program. It is likely that, if follow-up assessment information was available, there may not have been a great change in the risk scores of YID youth, as they recidivated at a similar rate to the non-YID youth. However, the YID youth did reoffend with less serious offences, which may indicate some small reduction in overall risk score.

Another limitation of the present study for consideration is the variability in program implementation across the province. The essence of a diversion plan is to tailor it to the unique needs and resources of the community in which it is run (Sullivan et al., 2007). Within the province of New Brunswick, an array of population concentrations, demographics, and resources exist. The sample of case files used in the present dissertation did include youth from each district, but the sampling method was not structured to ensure an adequate amount of cases from each district for comparative purposes. Thus, no meaningful statistical analyses could be conducted to

examine details and youth outcomes within each district YID process. It may not be a truly accurate assessment of the YID program to look at the processes and outcomes of the province as a whole. Doing so may have washed out some of the effect of diversion on reoffending events. It is recommended that each district replicate the program evaluation process with their own cases to examine the influence of diversion within their areas (Binder & Geis, 1984; Broner et al., 2004; Haines et al., 2015; Lattimore et al., 2003; Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2009; Schwalbe et al., 2012; Whittington et al., 2015).

Finally, the data used in the present dissertation were archival. This means that some of the limitations noted above regarding the standardization of documentation and case planning may already have been addressed through the natural progression of program development and feedback from frontline members. Specifically, it is possible that the RCMP has changed the documentation requirements for YID processes set out in 2012 after receiving real-time feedback from Community Program Officers about what was working and what was not (e.g., rewording consent forms; requiring forms be kept in a separate folder and then sent to the Crime Reduction Unit when the file is closed). Furthermore, the finding that qualitative aspects were missing from case records (i.e., documentation of Responsivity principle) does not necessarily indicate that these actions did not happen – they just were not recorded. These limitations are applicable to archival reviews of diversion programs more generally, and are not unique to the present study (Haines et al., 2015).

**Future Directions**

The program evaluation framework development and data collection for the present study took place within a large organization, which is a unique environment for some researchers. Therefore, a number of suggestions are offered for future researchers who would like to expand into the program evaluation branch of research. First, consultation with program developers and frontline staff is critical to formulate an accurate logic model and subsequently, the research questions. These individuals know the program and what outputs are available for data collection better than the incoming researcher and are a valuable resource for program details. Second, a program evaluation can easily balloon into a large and daunting project. It is recommended that researchers adhere to a manageable number of research questions and resist any temptation to expand the size of the project to capture more information or outcomes. Constantly increasing the research project may cause the original research questions to be lost and the work may take an extremely long time to complete. Program evaluations are meant to provide feedback to agencies and providing results in a timely manner allows for programs to implement recommendations and changes more quickly. Third, when working within a large organization, researchers are reminded to expect delays in the process. Typically, the organization will have its own timeline for completing necessary forms to access data sources, and may redirect researchers' requests to different departments or individuals. It can be helpful to have one agency employee to work closely with who can also act as a "go-to person" between the researcher and the organization. Finally, when conducting program evaluations, the researcher should strive to provide results in a

form that agency employees understand. Specifically, avoid excess jargon and a bombardment of research literature when discussing outcome results. Any recommendations for program improvement should be provided in plain language and use concrete examples for procedural change (if applicable). The results of program evaluations are meant to stimulate and influence actions in an agency, and so recommendations should be written with this purpose in mind.

The present dissertation examined the YID program that was operating during 2012, and therefore, may not be fully representative of the diversion practices that are occurring at this time. However, this is less likely to be the case given that no major policy changes or revisions to the YID protocol have occurred since 2012 (e.g., targeting a specific youth risk level population, mandating follow-up risk assessments procedures). It will be important for the RCMP to maintain periodic reviews of processes and outcomes from the YID strategy to compare what did happen to what is happening. The review process will be made easier with follow-up risk assessments and more detailed case documentation requirements.

Additional future directions for research on the YID process would be to interview or canvass other key stakeholders to garner their perspectives on the YID process, as well as its strengths and challenges. One sample that was not examined in the present study was the parents of youth diversion participants. This is a key stakeholder population as these individuals play a large part in how youth stay committed to referral requirements and attend meetings. Parents would be able to provide valuable feedback on the aspects of the process that could be altered to facilitate youth participation as well as parent/family participation if necessary.

Furthermore, there are instances in which parents are referred to services and it would be valuable to gather feedback on their experiences within the diversion system as well. To date, there has been one study (Draper, Errington, Omar, & Makhita, 2013) that has conducted focus group with parents of a diversion rehabilitation program for youth sexual offenders. Those authors found generally positive attitudes towards the process from parents, who noted improvements in a number of skills in their children, including schoolwork adherence, anger management, interpersonal relationships, and communication skills (Draper et al., 2013). The sample of parents in the Draper study was small ( $n = 7$ ) and limited to a single diversion program. Further exploration of parent attitudes toward diversion is necessary to acquire thematic saturation and increase generalizability of findings to other programs.

As part of a larger research project, additional key stakeholders have been interviewed for feedback on the YID process including Community Program Officers, frontline police officers and community service representatives (i.e., YID committee members, service providers). Acquiring perspectives from individuals in all aspects of a diversion process allows for a variety of opinions on the policies and procedures and what improvements to the process could be made to increase efficiency. Results from the larger research project may provide the RCMP with feedback regarding policy content (e.g., how to handle sharing client information between community agencies) and how to increase buy-in from the community population and its organizations. Some previous research has been conducted in this area (e.g., Fader et al., 2015; Sherman et al., 2005) and the results highlighted strengths and challenges for each diversion process under investigation. Interviewing key stakeholders from a variety of

positions within a diversion process can provide fruitful information about how the program is functioning as a complete system and thus, is an important area for all diversion program evaluations to include.

Future research should also look to expand the information obtained from the youth in the present study. Examining program processes from the youth perspective allows for understanding pieces of the process critical for maximizing program influence on youth attitudes toward antisocial behaviours. Having a larger sample than the one participant obtained in the present study would allow for thematic saturation to occur (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Acquiring a larger sample could be achieved if the RCMP implemented the exit survey strategy that was recommended above. That is, at the conclusion of the youth's involvement with YID, the youth and their guardian would be invited to participate in an interview or to complete open-ended questionnaires to provide feedback on their experiences. Instituting an exit survey strategy would eliminate a number of barriers to the interview process that arose in the present dissertation, including acquiring contact information for the individuals, making telephone contact with potential participants, and scheduling a time to meet for an interview.

Extending the method of the current dissertation, a prospective study following a comparable number of youth from each district would be recommended. Doing so would allow for comparisons within and across districts, and for closer examination of similar socioeconomic statuses of programs and resources as opposed to aggregating data across the province where such large differences in services occur.

Another worthwhile area of research arises from examining of the training sessions and content that Community Program Officers have received and how that translates into the services provided to the youth involved in the YID program. Community Program Officers have received training on the RNR model, Motivational Interviewing, and risk assessment using the YLS/CMI and the YLS/CMI:SV; but a thorough examination or audit of this knowledge would allow for mentoring to take place, which would subsequently increase standardization and accountability among Community Program Officers.

Consistent with previous researchers (e.g., Haqanee et al., 2015), further research needs to be conducted to examine the implementation of the Responsivity principle in practical applications. Specifically, more efficient ways are required to document the consideration of responsivity needs and the manner in which case plans are altered to incorporate those results.

### **Final Conclusions**

The present dissertation examined the Youth Intervention and Diversion strategy of the RCMP within the province of New Brunswick. The project explored both quantitative outcomes of youth diverted away from the criminal justice system, as well as the experiences of one program participant based on qualitative interview data. Difficulties with documentation and availability of information hampered the depth of the present study but some conclusions could be reached. First, recidivism data were comparable for YID and non-YID youth with respect to rate and time to reoffend, with the exception of reduced severity for YID participants when they did reoffend. Second, adherence to the RNR model was generally low for YID youth cases,



especially for higher risk youth. Finally, qualitative information revealed a positive attitude toward the YID program and diversion as a whole, but noted there were areas of the process that could be improved.

Overall, the RCMP's YID program is in progress and has laid the foundation for a system with the potential to divert youth away from the criminal justice system and into services to address youth criminogenic needs, but most of these youth have continued contact with police despite their involvement. To maximize the program's effect on reducing recidivism behaviour in youth, program entry requirements will need to be refined further and a more consistent use of risk assessment tools is needed both before and after diversion referrals are completed. Additionally, more detailed documentation of the diversion processes and decisions will allow for file audits to be completed, as well as to facilitate future program evaluations to monitor the effect of the YID program on youth risk scores and recidivism behaviour. The present YID strategy is a significant step in addressing the criminogenic needs of youth who come into contact with the law in the province of New Brunswick.

Table 1

*Comparison of Demographic Characteristics between YID and Non-YID Youth*

Characteristic	Subsample		<i>p</i>
	YID ( <i>n</i> = 100)	Non-YID ( <i>n</i> = 100)	
Age in years, <i>M</i> , ( <i>SD</i> )	15.07 (1.48)	15.03 (1.56)	.867
Age Range (in years)	12.00 – 17.08	12.00 – 18.01	
Gender (%)			.602
Male	65.0	65.0	-
Female	34.0	35.0	-
Other	1.0	-	-
Ethnicity (%)			.762
Caucasian	40.0	41.0	-
First Nations	4.0	3.0	-
Other	-	1.0	-
Unknown	56.0	55.0	-
First RCMP Contact (%)			.885
Yes	40.0	41.0	-
No	60.0	59.0	-
Follow-up length (in days), <i>M</i> , ( <i>SD</i> )	851.2 (96.7)	846.8 (99.5)	.750

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$  were criteria for statistical significance.

Table 2

*Descriptive statistics of variables used in analyses*

Variable	Analysis Sample ( <i>n</i> )	Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	Range	Missing Cases ( <i>n</i> )
<b>YID Case Files (<i>n</i> = 100)</b>				
Number of Index Offences	100	1.08 (.31)	1–3	-
MSO <sup>a</sup> of index offence	100	15.52 (3.16)	6–24	-
Total YLS/CMI:SV Score	99	3.82 (2.26)	0–8	1
Full YLS/CMI Completed	6	25.67 (4.37)	21–32	94
YLS/CMI:SV Risk Level				1
Low	34			
Medium	37			
High	28			
Adherence to RNR Principles				
Risk	88			12
Needs Met	73	4.10 (2.01)	0–7	27
Need	86			14
General Responsivity	15			85
Specific Responsivity	25			75
Total RNR Adherence	90			10
Lower	37			
Higher	53			
Reoffence (yes/no)	100			-
Follow-up length (days)	100	851.24 (96.72)	687–1029	-
MSO <sup>a</sup> of reoffence	70	12.96 (5.01)	1–24	30
<b>Non-YID Case Files (<i>n</i> = 100)</b>				
Total number of events at index offence	100	1.23 (.93)	1–6	-
MSO <sup>a</sup> of index offence	100	16.15 (4.24)	6 – 24	-
Reoffence (yes/no)	100			-
Follow-up length (days)	100	846.82 (99.54)	680 –1026	-
MSO <sup>a</sup> of reoffence	73	15.62 (4.13)	1–24	26

Note. MSO<sup>a</sup> = Most serious offence rating

Table 3

*Comparison of YID and Non-YID Youth Index Offence Characteristics*

Characteristic	Subsample		<i>p</i>
	YID ( <i>n</i> = 100)	Non-YID ( <i>n</i> = 100)	
Number of charges, <i>M</i> , ( <i>SD</i> )	1.08 (0.31)	1.23 (0.93)	.127
MSO <sup>a</sup> at Index, <i>M</i> , ( <i>SD</i> )	15.52 (3.16)	16.15 (4.24)	.235
Classification of Index MSO (%)			.107
Violent	29.0	38.0	
Nonviolent	60.0	45.0	
Sexual	-	4.0	
Drug Related	9.0	10.0	
Technical	2.0	3.0	
Result of Police Contact (%)			< .001***
Verbal/Written Warning	16.0	23.0	
Formal Caution	9.0	2.0	
Charges Recommended	-	42.0	
Referral to YID/CPO <sup>b</sup>	70.0	-	
Direct Referral to Service	2.0	-	
NFAR <sup>c</sup>	2.0	18.0	
Other	1.0	15.0	

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$  were criteria for statistical significance. <sup>a</sup>MSO

= Most Serious Offence rating. <sup>b</sup>CPO = Community Program Officer. <sup>c</sup>NFAR = No

Further Action Required.

Table 4

*Comparison of First Recidivism Event Characteristics for YID and Non-YID Youth*

Characteristic	Subsample		<i>p</i>
	YID ( <i>n</i> = 100)	Non-YID ( <i>n</i> = 100)	
New contact during follow-up period (% Yes)	70.0	72.0	.755
Classification of First Reoffence			.047*
Violent	31.4	35.6	
Nonviolent	40.0	52.1	
Sexual	1.4	4.1	
Drug Related	15.7	4.1	
Technical	11.4	4.1	
MSO <sup>a</sup> for First Reoffence, <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	12.96 (5.01)	15.62 (4.13)	.001***
Recidivism by Risk Level (%)			.079
Low ( <i>n</i> = 34)	64.7	-	
Medium ( <i>n</i> = 37)	64.9	-	
High ( <i>n</i> = 28)	82.1	-	

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$  were criteria for statistical significance. <sup>a</sup>MSO

= Most Serious Offence rating as determined by the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services *Statistical Reporting System User Manual*.

Table 5

*Adherence Rates to the Risk-Need-Responsivity Principles for YID Youth of Differing*

*YLS/CMI:SV Risk Levels*

YLS/CMI:SV Risk Category	<i>n</i>	Level of Overall Adherence (%)				
		None (0)	Slight (1)	Partial (2)	Some (3)	Full (4)
Low	29	6.9	6.9	79.3	6.9	-
Medium	34	20.6	26.5	38.2	14.7	-
High	27	51.9	11.1	22.2	11.1	3.7
Total	90	25.6	15.6	46.7	11.1	1.1

*Note.* Due to rounding procedures, total percentages may not add up to 100%.

Table 6

*Match Percentage Rates for Each Criminogenic Need Area among YID Youth of Differing YLS/CMI:SV Risk Levels*

YLS/CMI:SV Criminogenic Need Area	YLS/CMI:SV Risk Category			Total Need Match
	Low (n = 34)	Medium (n = 37)	High (n = 28)	
School/Employment	16.7	44.4	34.6	37.3
Criminal Friends	22.2	33.3	12.5	22.2
Alcohol/Drug	0.0	60.0	40.9	40.5
No Leisure/Recreation	50.0	33.3	16.0	26.4
Personality/Behaviour	33.3	57.9	42.3	47.1
Family Circumstances	0.0	26.3	40.0	31.7
Antisocial Attitudes	0.0	20.0	33.3	28.1
Total	21.2	37.8	31.1	32.8

*Note.* Percentages reported capture match rates for youth who had each area identified

as a criminogenic need (i.e., youth who had a need area rated at '0' are not included).

The number of youth for each risk level examined for each criminogenic need area varied according to available data (i.e., some need areas were omitted during initial assessment which limited ability to code case plan adherence).

Table 7

*Level of Engagement with Diversion Process among Youth of Differing YLS/CMI:SV**Risk Levels*

Level of Engagement	YLS/CMI:SV Risk Category		
	Low (n = 15)	Medium (n = 25)	High (n = 18)
No Engagement (0)	1 (6.7%)	2 (8.0%)	4 (22.2%)
Partial Engagement (1)	4 (26.7%)	7 (28.0%)	6 (33.3%)
Good Engagement (2)	10 (66.7%)	16 (64.0%)	8 (44.4%)



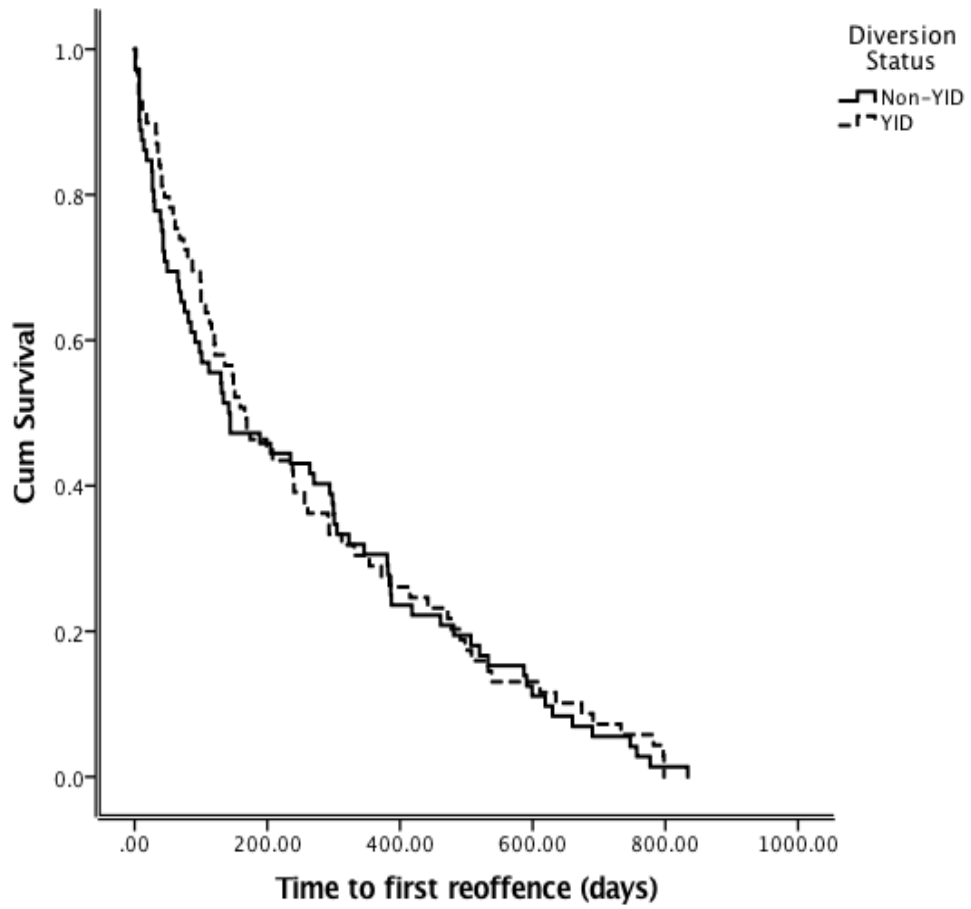
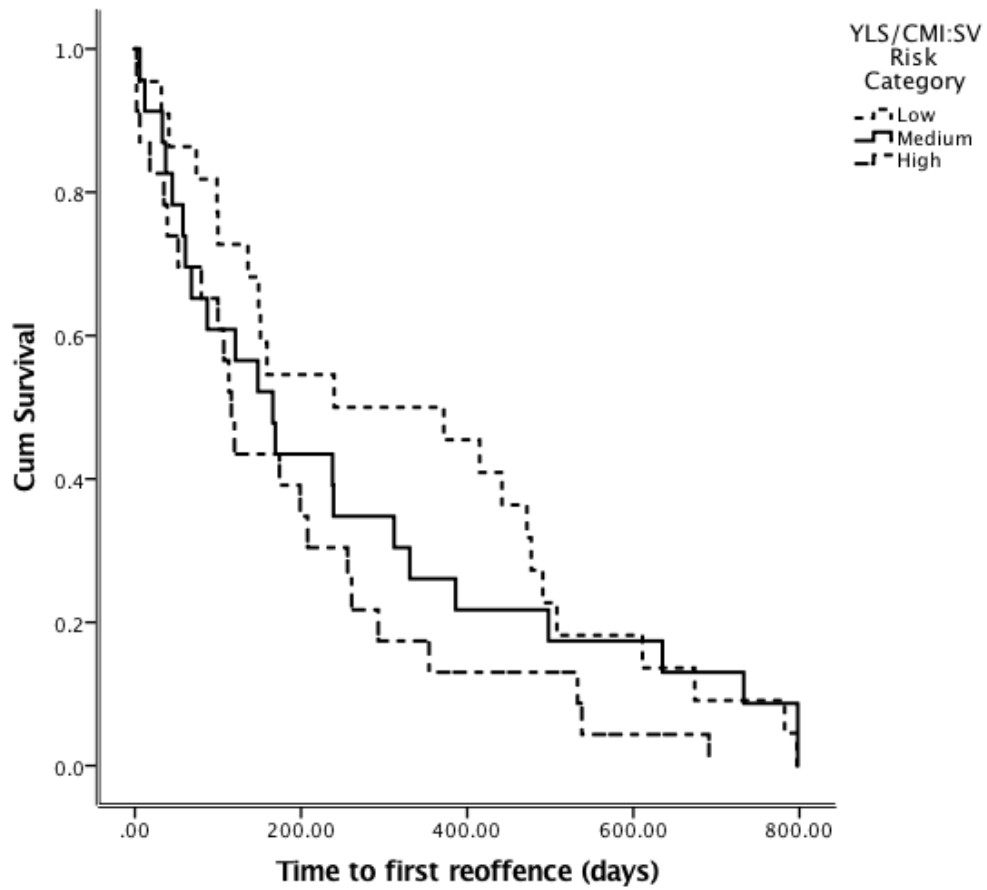
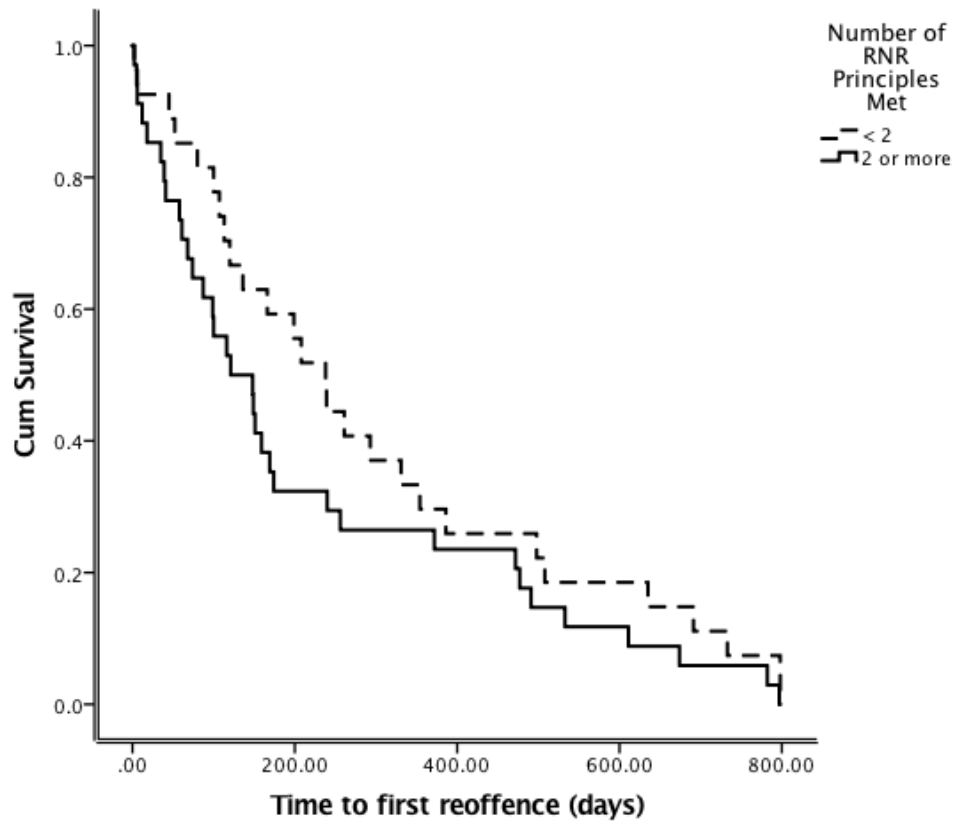


Figure 1. Survival curve comparing the time to first recidivism event for YID and non-YID youth.



*Figure 2.* Survival curve comparing time to first recidivism event for YID youth of different YLS/CMI:SV risk levels.



*Figure 3.* Survival curve comparing time to first recidivism event for YID youth with differing case plan RNR adherence levels.

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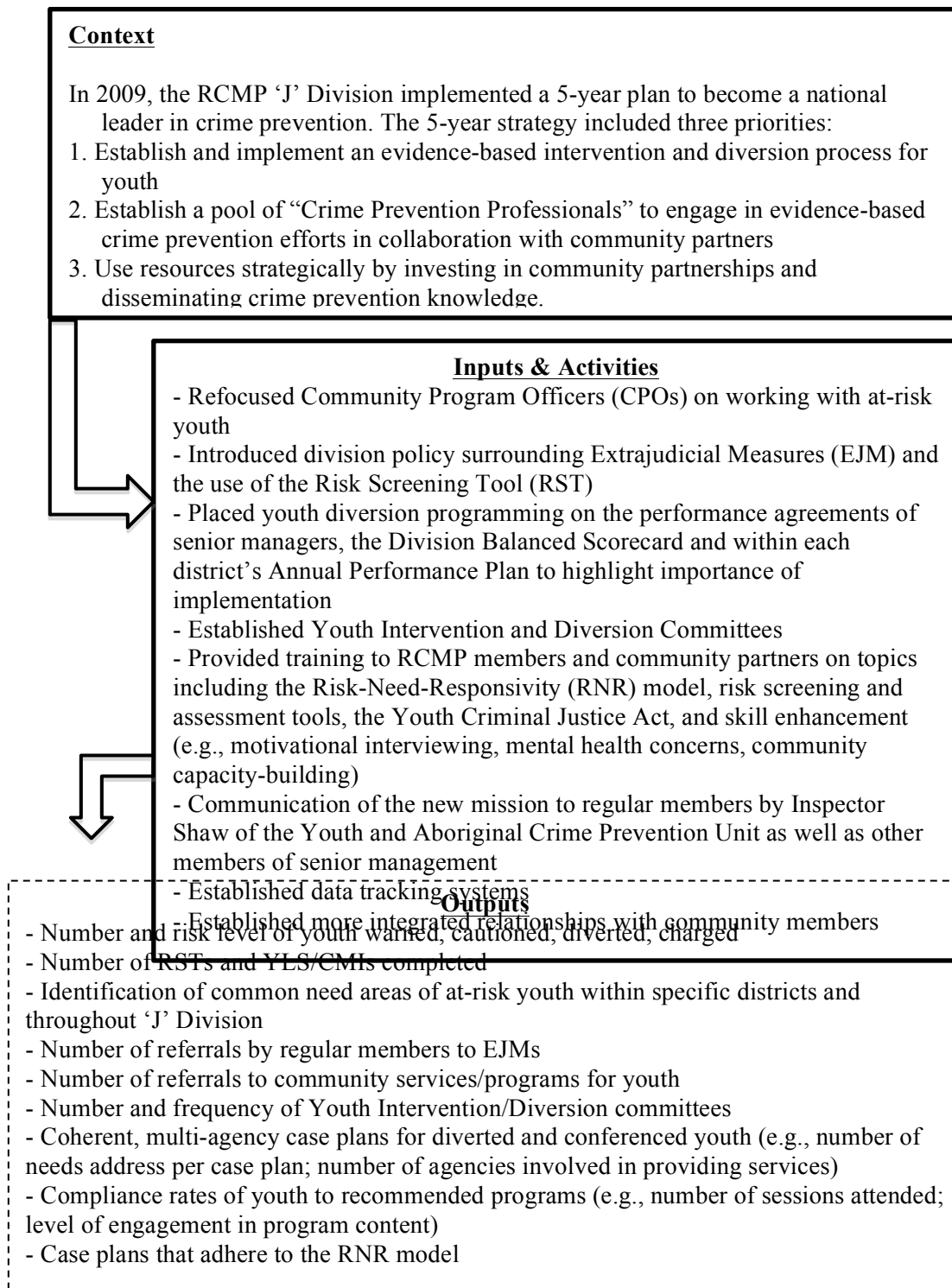


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## Appendix A

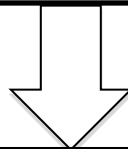
RCMP Youth Intervention/Diversion Strategy Evaluation Logic Model

**Short Term Outcomes****(1-2 years)**

- Reduced number of youth recidivism events (e.g., rearrests) relative to a non-diversion youth cohort(e.g., youth that were processed through the criminal justice system)
- Reduced individual youth risk level/need areas
- Changes in youth behaviour and attitudes towards crime (e.g., realizing the impact of their actions on the community at large)
- Changes in regular member attitudes towards youth diversion and EJM
- Development of knowledgeable CPOs and community members (e.g., RNR model, effective intervention practices)
- Appropriate intervention(s) that target identified risk/need areas at the appropriate level of intensity

**Long Term Outcomes****(2-5 years)**

- Larger percentage of youth meeting diversion criteria experiencing EJM over time
- Maintained reduction of youth recidivism rates relative to a non-diversion cohort
- Maintained positive changes in the identified criminogenic need areas of youth
- Time and resource efficient process from initial contact with regular member to completion of referral recommendations
- Efficient use of community and government resources through interdepartmental collaboration
- Provide evidence to support continued services or establish new, more relevant services within each district and across 'J' Division

**Future Impact (5+ years):**

Through maintaining involvement within a community-led intervention and diversion process, the 'J' Division RCMP strived to reduce the number and frequency of youths becoming involved with criminal activities while addressing their criminogenic needs. Additionally, the RCMP aims to provide information on youth risk factors to community partners in order to tailor the community services available for youth in each district.

## Appendix B

'J' Division Youth Intervention/Diversion Program EvaluationConsent to Contact

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has recently developed a program to divert youth away from the criminal justice system. In order to ensure this diversion process is working in the most efficient way, the RCMP will be conducting an ongoing evaluation of the procedures and corresponding youth outcomes.

One important aspect of this review is to ensure youth risk levels decrease after participating in intervention programs. At present, youth risk/need areas are assessed upon entering into the intervention/diversion process; however, in order to fully understand the impact of intervention programs a follow-up assessment of risk/need areas is needed.

Your participation in a follow-up assessment is being requested to gather the necessary data to assess the impact of the intervention/diversion strategy being operated by the RCMP. By agreeing to participate, you are providing consent for a representative of the RCMP to contact you and your youth in approximately 12 months to arrange a follow-up risk/need assessment. Participation in this process is completely voluntary and deciding to participate, or not participate, will not impact you or your youth in any way. There are no consequences, positive or negative, for participating in this evaluation, your experience of the youth intervention/diversion

program will not be impacted in any way. You also have the right to withdraw your consent at any point in time without punishment.

To protect your privacy, all information collected for the purposes of the program evaluation will be kept anonymous, with random research identification numbers assigned to participants. The signed consent forms will be kept separately from any data that is collected. When compiling the final evaluation only aggregate (group) data will be reported, no individual cases will be identified.

Please check to indicate if you consent to being contacted in approximately twelve (12) months for a follow-up assessment of risk/need areas of the youth:

I CONSENT

I DO NOT CONSENT

Name of parent/guardian (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of youth (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of youth: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

Telephone Script for Researcher Contact with Parent and/or Guardian of Youth

Hello, may I speak with [guardian's name]?

My name is Heather Dyck, I am a Clinical Psychology Ph.D. student at the University of New Brunswick. Your name and contact information has been provided to me by [insert name here] from the RCMP Headquarters in Fredericton. Previously, when [insert youth's name] came into contact with the RCMP and proceeded through the Youth Intervention and Diversion programming, you had signed a consent form allowing a RCMP representative to contact you and your son/daughter for a follow-up evaluation project.

Currently, I'm conducting an evaluation of the Youth Intervention and Diversion strategy for the RCMP in the province of New Brunswick and am calling to invite [insert youth's name] to participate in the evaluation. In order to more fully understand long-term impact of the intervention and diversion process, researchers are conducting follow-up interviews with youth who experienced the process in addition to reviewing randomly selected case file information. Others involved with the YID process, including some RCMP employees and other community members will also be interviewed.

Since [insert youth's name] has gone through the YID process, it would be valuable to gather his/her opinion on the experience. Participation in this evaluation is completely voluntary and deciding to participate, or not participate, will not affect him/her, or you, in any way in terms of your future potential dealings with the RCMP or legal system. By providing consent at the start of the YID process, you have only



indicated willingness to be contacted for participation in a future assessment. You do have the right to refuse participation in this evaluation interview.

Do you have any questions so far? I will next briefly describe what participation in the evaluation would require of you and [insert youth's name].

If you and [insert youth's name] decide to participate in the follow-up appointment, you are consenting to being interviewed by a UNB researcher (myself) about the experience of the intervention and diversion process. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed at a later date for data analysis without recording your identifying information. The interview is expected to take approximately 30-45 minutes. Additionally, you will be asked to provide consent for the researcher to review your specific Youth Intervention and Diversion case file and/or program notes that are held by the RCMP. This information will provide context to the interview as well as be included in the diverted youth group data to be used in the outcome evaluation. No other file information (e.g., health records) will be accessed. Your consent to one part of the evaluation does not impact on the other. For example, you can provide consent to participate in the interview but not to have the researcher examine your specific file information. After the interview session today, your participation in the evaluation is completed. You will be offered the opportunity to consent to be contacted again in the future for further evaluation efforts conducted by the RCMP.

Does all of that make sense so far? Is there anything that I can clarify for you?

To protect individual privacy, all information collected for the purposes of the Youth Intervention and Diversion strategy evaluation will be kept anonymous, with random identification numbers being assigned to participants. When compiling the final evaluation, only aggregate (group) data will be reported and no individual cases will be identified. In the instance where quotes will be used to provide context to the quantitative results, all details that may be linked to a specific individual will be altered (e.g., any names, unique program characteristics, unique personal situations, geographic locations) to reflect the same content but protect the individual's identity. Only researchers involved in this project from UNB will have access to the interview audio recordings and transcription. Audio recordings will be kept on an encrypted and password protected USB stick and all transcriptions of interview sessions will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the locked offices of the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies on the UNB Saint John campus.

Would you be willing to provide consent for [insert youth's name] to participate in the follow-up interview with me?

- If no = Thank you very much for your time. If you change your mind, please do not hesitate to contact me at RCMP Headquarters in Fredericton (provide office phone number).
- If yes = Thank you. Since [insert youth's name] is of the age that he/she is able to understand and provide agreement to participate, would I be able to explain the study to him/her over the phone as well to ensure he/she is interested in participating?

- If no = would there be a better day/time for me to call back in order to go over the study/participation with [insert youth's name]? Or are you ok with me explaining it to him/her when you attend the appointment?
- If yes = [go through the consent information again with the youth].
  - Does all of that make sense? Do you have any questions for me?
  - Your parent/guardian has provided me with consent for you to participate in the interview, but we do like to have the agreement of the person that's going to be interviewed. Would you like to provide your thoughts/opinions on your YID experience?
    - If yes = Thank you. I look forward to meeting with you. Could you please pass the phone back to your mother/father/guardian so that I can set up a time to meet with you?
    - If no = Do you have any questions or hesitations about participating that I can answer for you?

{Confirm date/time for appointment along with location before hanging up}

Telephone voicemail message (if no answer and leaving a voicemail is an option):

Hello, [insert parent/guardian name], my name is Heather Dyck, a PhD Student in Clinical Psychology at the University of New Brunswick. I am currently conducting a research project that may be of interest to you. Please contact me at (insert office

telephone number) at your earliest convenience and I will explain the project content and participation details. Thank you, have a nice day.

## Appendix D

## RCMP Youth Intervention /Diversion

## Program Evaluation Data Collection Form

RESEARCH ID: \_\_\_\_\_ DIVERTED OR NON-DIVERTED: \_\_\_\_\_

OFFENDER DEMOGRAPHICS:

Age at index offence (yy.mm) \_\_\_\_\_

Gender  Male  Female

Ethnicity  Caucasian  Asian  
 African Canadian  Arabian  
 First Nations  Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Latino/a  Unknown

Geographic location at  Northeast  District 1  District 7  
time of index offence  Southeast  District 2  District 8  
\*if date of offence is  West  District 3  District 9  
before the Sept 2013  Codiac  District 4  District 10  
amalgamation, indicate  District 5  District 11  
the district  District 6  District 12

Highest level of education achieved at the  Elementary  
start of diversion  Junior High/Middle School  
 High School

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Was this the youth's first contact with the [ ] Yes  
 police as a suspect (RCMP or other?) [ ] No

---

INDEX OFFENCE INFORMATION:

Date of Index Offence \_\_\_\_\_ (dd/mm/yy)

---

Total # of events at index offence \_\_\_\_\_

---

[ ] Murder/attempted murder

[ ] Serious violent (e.g., assault with weapon,  
 robbery, kidnapping, extortion)

[ ] Sexual violence (i.e., sexual assault, aggravated  
 sexual assault)

Type and number of criminal events associated with the index offence (tick all that apply)

[ ] Break & Enter (includes B&E tools)

[ ] Sexual Nonviolent (sexual interference,  
 possession/making/distributing child porn)

[ ] Trafficking/Importing

[ ] Weapons Offences

[ ] Fraud (e.g., uttering forged document, false  
 pretense)

[ ] Miscellaneous offences against persons (e.g.,  
 uttering threats)

[ ] Theft (possession of stolen property)

[ ] Common Assault

---

- Property Damage (mischief under)
- Obstruction of Justice (e.g., resisting arrest, escape of custody, obstruction of peace officer)
- Drug Possession
- Traffic Criminal Code Violation (e.g., dangerous driving)
- Breach of Court Order (e.g., failure to comply, unauthorized leave)
- Driving while Under the Influence
- Miscellaneous against Public Order (e.g., petty trespassing, public mischief (not causing damage), false alarm of fire)
- Other Federal Statutes
- Parole Violations (e.g., revocation of parole)
- Highway Traffic Accident
- Liquor Control Act Offence
- Other Provincial Statute Offences
- Municipal Bylaws (e.g., parking fines)

---

YLS/CMI:SV	History of CD	<input type="checkbox"/> Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent	<input type="checkbox"/> Omit
Needs Identified	School/Employ't Problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent	<input type="checkbox"/> Omit
	Criminal Friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent	<input type="checkbox"/> Omit
	Alcohol/Drug	<input type="checkbox"/> Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent	<input type="checkbox"/> Omit

---

Problems

No Leisure/Rec [ ] Present [ ] Absent [ ] Omit

Activities

Personality/ [ ] Present [ ] Absent [ ] Omit

Behaviour

Family [ ] 0 [ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] Omit

Circumstances

Antisocial [ ] 0 [ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] Omit

Attitudes

---

TOTAL	Risk Score:	Category
-------	-------------	----------

YLS/CMI:SV	_____	[ ] Low (0-4)
		[ ] Medium (5-8)
		[ ] High (9-12)

---

Flagged for follow-up	[ ] Yes
-----------------------	---------

assessment?	[ ] No
-------------	--------

\*if no, record reasoning at the end of the next section\*

---

Police action the	[ ] Verbal	[ ] Direct referral to community
youth received:	Warning	program by officer (e.g., no
	[ ] Written	involvement of YID team or no
	Warning	case conference convened)
	[ ] Formal	[ ] Youth I/D referral
	Caution	Date of referral _____

---





---

Score: \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] Low [ ] Medium [ ] High [ ] V. High

Personality/Behaviour

Score: \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] Low [ ] Medium [ ] High [ ] V. High

Family Circumstances

Score: \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] Low [ ] Medium [ ] High [ ] V. High

Antisocial Attitudes

Score: \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] Low [ ] Medium [ ] High [ ] V. High

---

Responsivity [ ] Yes      Details:

factors [ ] No      \_\_\_\_\_

identified

---

TOTAL	Category
YLS/CMI Risk Score:	[ ] Low (0-8)
_____	[ ] Medium (9-22)
	[ ] High (23-34)
	[ ] Very High (35-42)

---

Reasoning for YLS/CMI not \_\_\_\_\_

completed \_\_\_\_\_

---

### INTERVENTION/DIVERSION COMMITTEE RESULTS

Section 19 [ ] Yes [ ] No

conference Reason why no conference:

convened? \_\_\_\_\_

(e.g., referred directly to service, referred to ISD for follow-

---

up, case-conferenced via another existing committee)

Date of Committee Meeting \_\_\_\_\_ (dd/mm/yy)

	<input type="checkbox"/> History of CD	<input type="checkbox"/> Matched Need
Intervention	<input type="checkbox"/> School/Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> Matched Need
Recommendations	<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal Friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Matched Need
Addressing:	<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol/Drug Problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Matched Need
	<input type="checkbox"/> Leisure/Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> Matched Need
	<input type="checkbox"/> Personality/Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Matched Need
	<input type="checkbox"/> Family Circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/> Matched Need
	<input type="checkbox"/> Antisocial Attitudes	<input type="checkbox"/> Matched Need
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Matched Need

Nature and Orientation of Intervention (according to the YLS/CMI planning section):	Required Number of hours? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Nature of Intervention (e.g., individual/group, weekly/monthly): _____
	Orientation of Intervention (e.g., cognitive behavioural, behavioural, interpersonal, psychoeducational): _____

YOUTH BEHAVIOUR DURING DIVERSION

Start Date of Diversion	_____ (dd/mm/yy)
Programming	_____ (dd/mm/yy)

Did the youth commit any new offences since being referred to YID (whether or not services had begun)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, date of <i>first</i> re-offence	_____ (dd/mm/yy) – <i>date of offence</i>
If yes, did the offence take place <i>after</i> they were referred for services but <i>before</i> the services began? (i.e., during the waitlist period)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, type and # of new offence(s) committed	<input type="checkbox"/> Murder/attempted murder <input type="checkbox"/> Serious violent (e.g., assault w/ weapon, robbery, kidnapping) <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual violence (i.e., sexual assault/aggravated sexual assault) <input type="checkbox"/> Break & Enter (includes B&E tools) <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Nonviolent (sexual interference, possession/making/distributing child porn) <input type="checkbox"/> Trafficking/Importing <input type="checkbox"/> Weapons Offences <input type="checkbox"/> Fraud (e.g., uttering forged document, false pretence) <input type="checkbox"/> Misc. offences against persons (e.g., uttering threats)

	<input type="checkbox"/> Theft (possession of stolen property) <input type="checkbox"/> Common Assault <input type="checkbox"/> Property Damage (mischief under) <input type="checkbox"/> Obstruction of Justice (e.g., resisting arrest, escape of custody, obstruction of peace officer) <input type="checkbox"/> Drug Possession <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Criminal Code Violation (e.g., dangerous driving) <input type="checkbox"/> Breach of Court Order (e.g., failure to comply) <input type="checkbox"/> Driving while Under the Influence <input type="checkbox"/> Misc. against Public Order (e.g., petty trespassing, public mischief (not causing damage), false alarm of fire) <input type="checkbox"/> Other Federal Statutes <input type="checkbox"/> Parole Violations (e.g., revocation of parole) <input type="checkbox"/> Highway Traffic Accident <input type="checkbox"/> Liquor Control Act Offence <input type="checkbox"/> Other Provincial Statute Offences <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal Bylaws (e.g., parking fines)	
# of days between start of YID services and <i>first</i> re-offence	_____	
Results of new offence and contact with	<input type="checkbox"/> Verbal Warning <input type="checkbox"/> Written Warning <input type="checkbox"/> Formal Caution <input type="checkbox"/> Crown Caution	<input type="checkbox"/> Direct referral to community program by officer (e.g., no involvement of YID team or no case conference)

police	<input type="checkbox"/> EJS (e.g., community service, restorative justice) Specify: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Charges Recommended	convened) <input type="checkbox"/> Youth I/D referral Date of Youth I/D referral _____ <input type="checkbox"/> NFAR <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
--------	--	--

If more than one re-offence took place during the YID service provision period, indicate the total number of re-contact/re-offence events: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimation of youth's level of engagement in diversion programming	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 – No engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often missed appointments, unmotivated to change, no engagement with service providers, frequent non-compliance</li> </ul> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – Partial engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent attendance, partially motivated to change, some engagement with service providers, inconsistent compliance</li> </ul> <input type="checkbox"/> 2 – Good engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attends most appointments, appears motivated to change, actively works with service providers, consistent compliance</li> </ul>
--	--

POST INTERVENTION/DIVERSION

Date of Diversion completion \_\_\_\_\_ (dd/mm/yy)

Completion within 6 month statute? [ ] Yes [ ] No

POST-INTERVENTION/DIVERSION ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Date of YLS/CMI completion

\_\_\_\_\_ (dd/mm/yy)

YLS/CMI Risk/Needs History of CD Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment [ ] Low [ ] Medium [ ] High [ ] V. High

*Change: Increase/Decrease/NC*

\*Indicate if change &gt; Education/Employment Score: \_\_\_\_\_

1 took place [ ] Low [ ] Medium [ ] High [ ] V. High

*Change: Increase/Decrease/NC*

Criminal Friends Score: \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Low [ ] Medium [ ] High [ ] V. High

*Change: Increase/Decrease/NC*

Alcohol/Drug Problems Score: \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Low [ ] Medium [ ] High [ ] V. High

*Change: Increase/Decrease/NC*

Leisure/Recreation Score: \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Low [ ] Medium [ ] High [ ] V. High

*Change: Increase/Decrease/NC*

Personality/Behaviour Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Low  Medium  High  V. High

*Change:* Increase/Decrease/NC

Family Circumstances Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Low  Medium  High  V. High

*Change:* Increase/Decrease/NC

Antisocial Attitudes Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Low  Medium  High  V. High

*Change:* Increase/Decrease/NC

TOTAL YLS/CMI @ Follow-up	Risk Score: _____	Category <input type="checkbox"/> Low (0-8) <input type="checkbox"/> Medium (9-22) <input type="checkbox"/> High (23-42) <input type="checkbox"/> Very High (35-42)
CHANGE > 2.6 (S.E.M)	RISK SCORE <input type="checkbox"/> INCREASE <input type="checkbox"/> DECREASE <input type="checkbox"/> NO CHANGE	RISK CATEGORY <input type="checkbox"/> INCREASE <input type="checkbox"/> DECREASE <input type="checkbox"/> NO CHANGE

#### YOUTH BEHAVIOUR AFTER INTERVENTION/DIVERSION

Did the youth commit any new offences since referred to YID up to Nov 1, 2014?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, date of <i>first</i> re-offence	_____ (dd/mm/yy) – <i>base date offence</i>



<p>If yes, type and # of new charges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Murder/attempted murder</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Serious violent (e.g., assault with weapon, robbery, kidnapping, extortion)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sexual violence (i.e., sexual assault/aggravated sexual assault)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Break &amp; Enter (includes B&amp;E tools)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Nonviolent (sexual interference, possession/making/distributing child porn)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Trafficking/Importing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Weapons Offences</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fraud (e.g., uttering forged document, false pretense)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Misc. offences against persons (e.g., uttering threats)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Theft (possession of stolen property)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Common Assault</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Property Damage (mischief under)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Obstruction of Justice (e.g., resisting arrest, escape of custody, obstruction of peace officer)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Drug Possession</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Criminal Code Violation (e.g., dangerous driving)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Breach of Court Order (e.g., failure to comply, unauthorized leave)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Driving while Under the Influence</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Misc. against Public Order (e.g., petty trespassing, public</li> </ul>
--	--

	mischief (not causing damage), false alarm of fire) <input type="checkbox"/> Other Federal Statutes <input type="checkbox"/> Parole Violations (e.g., revocation of parole) <input type="checkbox"/> Highway Traffic Accident <input type="checkbox"/> Liquor Control Act Offence <input type="checkbox"/> Other Provincial Statute Offences <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal Bylaws (e.g., parking fines)
--	--

# of days between beginning of services and re-offence	_____
--	-------

Results of new offence and contact with police	<input type="checkbox"/> Verbal Warning <input type="checkbox"/> Written Warning <input type="checkbox"/> Formal Caution <input type="checkbox"/> EJS <input type="checkbox"/> Charges	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth I/D referral Date of YID referral: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Charges <input type="checkbox"/> NFAR <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
--	--	--

If more than one re-offence took place,  
 indicate the total number of re-contact/re-offence events: \_\_\_\_\_

---

RISK-NEED-RESPONSIVITY (RNR) ADHERENCE CODING


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*SEE ADDITIONAL RNR CODING INSTRUCTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE FOR DEFINITIONS*

*AND EXAMPLES*

RISK Principle		<input type="checkbox"/> Met		<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met			
NEED Principle	EE	CF	AD	LR	PB	FC	AA
	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Y
	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Majority of Needs Met?					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
RESPONSIVITY Principle		General Responsivity <input type="checkbox"/> Met <input type="checkbox"/> Not Met					
		Specific Responsivity <input type="checkbox"/> Met <input type="checkbox"/> Not Met					

OVERALL

<u>RNR</u>	No	Slight	Partial	Some	Full
<u>ADHERENCE</u>	Adherence	Adherence	Adherence	Adherence	Adherence
<u>SCORE:</u>	0	1	2	3	4

Additional Coding Information (check all that apply):

- Code A  Not referred for services
- Code B  Content of services unknown
- Code C

### Risk-Need-Responsivity Coding Definitions and Examples

#### Coding RISK

- For this variable, examine the overall YLS/CMI or YLS/CMI:SV risk category and consider if the youth received intervention and/or services (e.g., monitoring) that “matches” their risk level.
- Examples:
  - For a “High” risk youth: higher intervention services (e.g., longer time per session and/or a higher number of sessions than is typical for a specific service); a variety of intervention services (e.g., more than one need area targeted at a time); higher level of supervision (e.g., more frequent check-ins by the supervising body)
  - For a “Low” risk youth: minimal intervention services (e.g., 1-2 sessions, minimal time commitment), lower level of supervision (e.g., longer time between check-ins)

#### Coding NEED

1. For each criminogenic need area, indicate whether or not the need was addressed appropriately in the case plan.
  - a. YES
    - i. If a need area was identified by the YLS/CMI or YLS/CMI:SV as being an area of *high* need and the youth *was referred* to a service that targeted that area.

- ii. If a need area was identified by the YLS/CMI or YLS/CMI:SV as being an area of *low* need and the youth *was not referred* to a service to target that area.
- b. NO
- i. If a need area was identified by the YLS/CMI or YLS/CMI:SV as being an area of *high* need and the youth *was not referred* to a service that targeted that area.
  - ii. If a need area was identified by the YLS/CMI or YLS/CMI:SV as being an area of *low* need and the youth *was referred* to a service to target that area.

Below is a list of interventions and treatment goals that could be considered evidence of matching an identified criminogenic need area. This list is not exhaustive and is meant to capture typical interventions for need areas, not to discount others unique to specific local areas.

Criminogenic Need	Risk Indicators	Intervention goals
Education- Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low satisfaction in school-work, poor performance</li> <li>▪ Unemployed, no high school (suspended, expelled)</li> <li>▪ Poor peer-authority interaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enhance work/study skills and interpersonal relationships within the context of work and school</li> <li>▪ Educational upgrading/tutoring, job training, helping clients look for/ apply for/ retain a job.</li> </ul>

Family Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inappropriate parental disciplining, abuse.</li> <li>▪ Poor family relationships,</li> <li>▪ Chaotic intimate relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teaching parenting skills, enhance warmth and caring, build positive relationships</li> <li>▪ Reduce conflict in relationships</li> <li>▪ Family/couples therapy, individual therapy focused on interpersonal/family issues, DBT</li> </ul>
Leisure- Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of involvement in prosocial recreational/leisure activities</li> <li>▪ Could make better use of time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encourage prosocial recreational activities, teach prosocial hobbies and sports</li> <li>▪ Volunteer activities, attending church, community involvement, productive use of free time</li> <li>▪ Recreational activities (bowling, movies, etc)</li> </ul>
Criminal Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Criminal friends, or people who get into “trouble”</li> <li>▪ Isolation from prosocial others</li> <li>▪ Few prosocial friends, just acquaintances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Replace procriminal friends and associates with prosocial friends and prosocial support network</li> <li>▪ Discouraging isolation, boredom</li> <li>▪ Social activities, reconnecting</li> </ul>

		with old friends
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DBT, individual, CBT focused on social skills and positive peer relations.</li> </ul>
Alcohol- Drug Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Current alcohol/drug use</li> <li>▪ History of alcohol/drug use</li> <li>▪ Leads to legal, family, marital, school, work, medical problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduce substance abuse, reduce supports for substance-oriented behavior, enhance alternatives to substance use, avoiding high relapse risk situations</li> <li>▪ Detox, Ridgewood (methadone treatment), AA/NA</li> <li>▪ Individual therapy</li> </ul>
Antisocial Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attitudes, rationalizations, and beliefs supportive of crime</li> <li>▪ Negative attitudes towards the law, offense or treatment</li> <li>▪ Finds criminal behaviour useful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Build a prosocial identity, counter rationalizations, minimizations, justifications (related to crime in general or specific offenses) with prosocial attitudes</li> <li>▪ Individual therapy, CBT, DBT</li> </ul>
Personality/ Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impulsive, adventurous pleasure seeking, anger problems, aggressive and irritable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Build problem-solving skills, self-management skills, teach anger management and coping skills</li> </ul>

- 
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Antisocial Personality Disorder or traits</li> <li>▪ History of assault/violence</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fostering noncriminal thinking, victim awareness and empathy, and development of prosocial values.</li> <li>▪ Individual therapy, CBT, DBT</li> </ul> |
|--|--|
- 

2. Majority of Needs Met – for this item, at least 4 out of the 7 criminogenic need areas must have been properly addressed. This is regardless of whether the need area was high or low risk.

#### Coding Responsivity

1. General Responsivity – consider the information available on the intervention services that the youth was referred to. Is this service operating using evidence-based methods/orientations? For example:
  - Using cognitive-behavioural interventions for procriminal attitudes, attitudes
  - Using role-modeling for skill building for prosocial skills
2. Specific Responsivity – considering the case plan information, is there evidence that it has been tailored to the youth’s individual strengths and/or learning styles. For example:
  - Using vocabulary and strategies (e.g., concrete vs. abstract) that are appropriate for the youth’s intellectual and/or cognitive abilities



- Invoking the youth's identified strengths (e.g., access to supportive adult mentor, emotional maturity) to increase engagement and adherence to the case plan

#### OVERALL RNR ADHERENCE

To obtain an overall score – count the number of principles adhered to:

1. Risk
2. Majority of Needs Met
3. General Responsivity
4. Specific Responsivity

#### \*\*If there is insufficient information to code the RNR principles\*\*

A rating A, B or C means that insufficient information was available to rate the principle as either met or not met. In this case, write on the form that the principle adherence rating is “missing”, and note the reason by specifying which of the following reasons apply:

- A.** Evidence that client received treatment services of some kind, but there is no information as to the content of the sessions. Exact issue addressed is unknown.
- B.** Client was referred to an external service (Ridgewood, education upgrading, job training but there is no information that indicates whether client actually went and participated in these services. Generally reflects poor inter-service communication.
- C.** Notes are very generic, vague, or irrelevant, or there is simply no information.

## Appendix E

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Youth

Introduction: Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. As it says on the consent form, the purpose of this interview is to understand what the RCMP's Intervention and Diversion process is like for a youth who actually goes through it. Sometimes what adults feel "should" be a good experience for kids does not always turn out to be that way. So, I will be asking you a few questions and I would like you to tell me your honest opinions. There are no right or wrong answers, and no one will be able to match your responses back to you – if we use a quote that you provide here today in the results of the study, we will make sure to take out or change any names that you provide and we may alter some details of your story (e.g., location) so that no one will be able to pin point who exactly gave the quote. To help protect your privacy, I will not refer to you by your name throughout the interview, so that your name is not recorded.

Does all of that make sense? Can you tell me how I am going to protect your privacy when I use what you say in this interview? [correct/remind youth if he/she does not remember]. I am going to turn on the audio recorder. If at any point there is something you do not want me to record, just let me know and I will stop the tape.

Questions:

1. Please describe the YID process you went through, starting with your first contact with the RCMP. Examples of probes to use if youth is unsure how to respond:
  - What led to your involvement with diversion in the first place?

- What happened when you were with the police officer? – What did you think about what the officer had to say and how he/she spoke to you?
  - Who got in touch with you to set up an assessment or meeting for YID?
  - When (if ever) was the YID process explained to you and your parents/guardian?
    - i. What did you understand about diversion after that talk?
  - Was there anything in particular that you or your parents/guardian had to do as a result of the YID conference and/or recommendations?
  - What kinds of services or programs or places were you sent to as a result of being in the diversion program (what did you need to do to participate - # of days, time commitment involved, format of service delivery as one-on-one vs. group format, etc.)?
  - What happened when the diversion period was over? What kind of follow-up contact did you have, if any, with the diversion people or the police when you were all done with the program?
  - Was there a particular person assigned to you (e.g., “case manager”) throughout the process? Who was that person? What did he/she do with you or for you? How helpful/unhelpful did you find this person?
  - About how long did each step in the process take from first contact with police, refer for assessment, start/end of programs, end of the process)?
2. In what ways did going through diversion help you, if at all? In what ways was it unhelpful to you?

3. In what ways did going through diversion help out things at home or with your family, if at all? In what ways was it unhelpful to you?
4. In what ways did you and/or your family need to do to make sure that you were able to fully participate in the diversion services and attend these services?
  - Examples if youth is unsure: transportation arrangements, schedule changes, babysitter for siblings, work schedule changes, school programming changes
5. Have there been any particular skills or lessons that you learned by going through diversion that will help you avoid criminal behaviour in the future? Describe them for me.
6. If you could change the diversion process to make it better, what types of things would you change? What would you keep?
7. What is the most important thing that you have taken away from participating in YID (good or bad)?

Conclusion:

- Thank you very much for taking the time to come in to speak with me today. It is very important that I am able to understand how your experience was in the program so that we can make it as helpful of an experience as possible.
- How are you feeling about the interview?
- If you do feel uncomfortable about any topics we brought up later on, or if you feel like you need to speak with someone for support, please don't hesitate to contact {insert local mental health contact information here}.

## Appendix F

Informed Consent for Youth and Guardian(s) for In-Person Interview

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has hired researchers from the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies at the University of New Brunswick to study the Youth Intervention and Diversion (YID) program. This program wants to steer youth away from the criminal justice system and into community-based services. The goals of this study are (1) to make sure that youth are getting services they need and (2) to learn about the experiences of individuals involved in the YID program (e.g., the RCMP police officers, community and government service providers, parents/guardians of youth involved and the youth themselves).

One important part of the evaluation is to see if youth risk levels go down after being in the YID program. Currently, risk/need areas are measured when a youth first comes into the YID process and, in some cases, at the end of the process. In order to see the long-term impact of the program, the researchers will be interviewing youth who went through the YID process and looking at randomly selected case files.

When you started the YID process, you and your guardian(s) agreed to be contacted for a future research study. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and deciding to participate, or not participate, will not affect you or your guardian(s) in any way. You do still have the right to not participate.

By agreeing to take part in the meeting today, you are agreeing to being interviewed by a UNB researcher about the youth experience of the YID program. This interview will be audio recorded and written out at a later date for data analysis. The interview today will take about 30-45 minutes. You also will be asked to agree to

let the researcher to look at your YID case file and/or program notes that are held by the RCMP. No other file information (e.g., health records) will be looked at. The file information will be used to give background context for the interview and will be used in the overall group analyses for the results of YID. Your consent to one part of the study does not impact the other. For example, you can give consent to the interview but not to have the researcher look at your file information. After the interview session today, your role in the study is finished. You will be asked if you want to be contacted again in the future for further research studies for the RCMP.

To protect your privacy, all data for the YID study will be kept anonymous and research ID numbers will be used instead of names. When putting together the results, only group data will be reported. No individual cases will be mentioned. When quotes are used to give the results context, details that may be linked to an individual will be changed (e.g., personal situations, geographic locations) to have the same content but protect the individual's identity. Only researchers from UNB will have access to the interview audio recordings and scripts. Audio recordings will be kept on an encrypted and password protected USB stick and all scripts of interview sessions will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the locked offices of the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies on the UNB Saint John campus.

If you have any concerns about this project, please contact the primary researcher, Heather Dyck ([heather.dyck@unb.ca](mailto:heather.dyck@unb.ca)), Ms. Dyck's supervisor Dr. Mary Ann Campbell ([mcampbel@unb.ca](mailto:mcampbel@unb.ca)) or the Psychology Ethics Chair at the University of Saint John, Dr. Lisa Best ([reb@unbsj.ca](mailto:reb@unbsj.ca); 506-648-5908). This project is also on file at the University of New Brunswick's Research Ethics Board (File #30-2014).

- I have read the above information and consent to participate in the Youth Intervention and Diversion evaluation
  - I have read the above information and do not consent to participate in the Youth Intervention and Diversion evaluation
- 

- I have read the above information and consent to the researchers accessing my specific Youth Intervention and Diversion programming case file information
  - I have read the above information and do not consent to the researchers accessing my Youth Intervention and Diversion programming case file information
- 

I/We are interested in receiving a summary of the evaluation results when they become available:

- No
- Yes

Please contact me with the results via (*leave blank if you do not want a result summary*):

Email:

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Post:

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Name of Youth:

Signature of Youth:

Date:

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Name of Guardian:

Signature of Guardian:

Date:

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- I consent to be contacted in the future for follow-up evaluations of the RCMP Youth Intervention and Diversion strategy.
  
- I do not consent to be contacted in the future for follow-up evaluations of the RCMP Youth Intervention and Diversion strategy.



## Appendix G

Demographic Questionnaire for Youth Interview Participants

The following questions have been developed to contextualize the group of youth who have participated in YID and agreed to be interviewed. It is your choice to provide this information, and doing so is also independent of your decision whether or not to participate in the individual interview (e.g., you can choose to not provide this information but still participate in the interview). The results of this demographic questionnaire will only be reported in aggregate (group) form. No single individual's information will be reported alone.

Please do not indicate your name or district on this form. After you have completed this form, if you choose to participate, please seal it in the provided envelope.

1. What is your age (in years)? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Please indicate your gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Other
3. Please indicated the group you identify most with:
  - Caucasian
  - First Nations
  - African Canadian
  - Asian
  - Arabian
  - Other (please specify):  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Please indicate the highest level of education you have obtained:

- Elementary School
  - Highest grade completed: \_\_\_\_\_
- Some High School
  - Highest grade completed: \_\_\_\_\_
- Completed High School or GED
- Some University or College
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

5. About how long has it been since you have had contact with the RCMP?

\_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

## Curriculum Vitae

Heather L. Dyck

### UNIVERSITIES ATTENDED

- 2010 – Present    Ph.D.    Clinical Psychology\***  
University of New Brunswick  
Fredericton, New Brunswick  
Dissertation Title: *An evaluation of the RCMP's Youth Intervention and Diversion strategy in New Brunswick*  
Supervisor: Mary Ann Campbell, Ph.D.  
\*CPA Full Accreditation
- 2006 – 2010    B.A.    Psychology (Honours), with Distinction**  
Grant MacEwan University  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Thesis title: *Examining the impact of individual awareness on the stigmatization of those with mental illness.*  
Supervisor: Andrew J. Howell, Ph.D.

### PUBLICATIONS

- McDougall, A., Dyck, H., Macaulay, A., Wershler, J., Canales, D. D., & Campbell, M. A. (2014). The responsivity principles of case management and the case of the long forgotten "R": Responsivity research at the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies. *Psynopsis*, 36(1), 18-19.
- Dyck, H. L., Campbell, M. A., Schmidt, F., & Wershler, J. (2013). Youth psychopathic traits and their impact on long-term criminal offending trajectories. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 11, 230-248.
- Howell, A. J., Weikum, B. A., & Dyck, H. L. (2011). Psychological essentialism and its association with stigmatization. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 50, 95-100.

### PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH REPORTS

- Dyck, H., & Campbell, M. A. (2016). *An implementation review of the Youth Intervention and Diversion strategy in New Brunswick*. Unpublished report, Department of Psychology, University of New Brunswick Saint John, Saint John, NB.

Wershler, J. L., Campbell, M. A., & Dyck, H. L. (2015). *A research framework for evaluation of the Department of Public Safety adult and youth diversion programs*. Report submitted to the New Brunswick Department of Public Safety. Saint John, NB: Centre for Criminal Justice Studies.

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## **CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

Dyck, H. L., Campbell, M. A., & Greythorn, W. (June, 2015). *Psychopathic Communication: Nuances in sarcasm usage*. North American Correctional and Criminal Justice Psychology Conference, Ottawa, Ontario.

Dyck, H. L., Campbell, M. A., & Wershler, J. L. (June, 2014). The effect of RNR and Motivational Interviewing integration in community supervised adult offenders. In M. A. Campbell (Chair), *Risk-Need-Responsivity adherence in offender case management*. Symposium conducted at the Canadian Psychological Association Annual Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia.

Wershler, J., Campbell, M. A., & Dyck, H. L. (June, 2014). Impact of an adolescent case management strategy with RNR principles. In M. A. Campbell (Chair), *Risk-Need-Responsivity adherence in offender case management*. Symposium conducted at the Canadian Psychological Association Annual Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia.

Dyck, H. L., Doucette, N., Campbell, M. A., & Earle, J. (June, 2012). Self-report psychopathy and socially desirable responding in forensic & non-forensic samples. In M. A. Campbell (Chair), *The ins and outs of the Youth Psychopathic Traits Inventory for adolescents and adults*. Symposium conducted at the Canadian Psychological Association Annual Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Dyck, H. L., Campbell, M. A., Schmidt, F., & Kruse, A. (June, 2011). *Exploring Young Offender Psychopathic Trait Levels and the Impact on Long-Term Criminal Offending Trajectories*. North American Correctional and Criminal Justice Psychology Conference, Toronto, Ontario.

Howell, A. J., Weikum, B. A., & **Dyck, H. L.** (June, 2010). *Psychological essentialism predicts stigmatization*. Poster presentation at the Canadian Psychological Association Annual Conference, Winnipeg, Manitoba.