

Dirt roads to justice and heartland girls: Coercive sexual environments in non-  
metropolitan communities

by

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B.A., Kansas Wesleyan University, 2006  
M.A., Washburn University, 2009

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work  
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

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## **Abstract**

This study analyzes in-depth interviews with incarcerated girls and young women, as well as contributions from community actors, to assess coercive sexual environments (CSE) in non-urban areas. CSEs represent an area of limited research that spotlights spatial disadvantage and sexual exploitation of at-risk girls, generating long-lasting negative effects for young women such as sexual harassment, exploitation, and sexual violence. Little is known about how CSEs may increase risk for girls' involvement in the criminal justice system; further, all previous CSE research has been conducted in urban areas. To address these voids, the current study takes place in a primarily rural state, representing social control mechanisms somewhat different from cityscapes. Using a multi-pronged conceptual model of gendered pathways, ecological factors, and feminist criminology, the project relies heavily on stories from incarcerated girls and women. It identifies gender-specific mechanisms that perpetuate disadvantage and violence, examining how such apparatus may create a pipeline into the justice system. Tracing participants' community roots, the study further gathers structural and cultural characteristics of the locale, assessing social control practices as reported by local professionals. Results confirm existence of CSEs in rural areas, which may produce negative outcomes and establish direct and indirect connections between young women and the justice system. Non-urban CSEs reveal origins common to those found in cities; patriarchy is identified as accounting for emergence of CSEs regardless of populous. The maintenance of such mechanisms, however, appear to be somewhat unique in rural communities; family name, a heavily-gendered veneer of idyllic but [un]safe milieux, and an absence of (and community reluctance to seek) vital services for abused girls and women are revealed as CSE characteristics in the areas of this study. Further, the current study challenges literature proclaiming solely positive results from high levels of

collective efficacy, finding that strong collective efficacy in non-urban areas gathers close insider ties, but “outsiders,” which includes girls identified in this research, are defined quickly and deeply, placing them in significant peril. Policy recommendations include trauma-informed services in rural communities, coupled with education on characteristics associated with CSEs. While this research underscores over-incarceration of girls, it also suggests stop-gap approaches that address unique needs of young women in the justice system. Finally, recommendations for future CSE studies are offered.

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Approved by:

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L. Susan Williams

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## **Dedication**

To the memory of my grandmother, Edna Nuss. You taught me the value in hard work while scolding me for doing too much. I always knew you were proud.

## Preface

The title of this study underscores a focus on girls in rural communities and their involvement in the juvenile justice system. This dissertation offers much more. Chapters 1 and 2 provide a deep dive into life-course histories of young women, specific to their traumas and local sexualized culture. One must first understand the roots from which they grew. Inspired by feminist methodology and qualitative research, I dug emotionally and interpersonally, interviewing some of those most oppressed—incarcerated girls and women. As Chapter 3 outlines, I attempt to channel my voice for those who are ignored. I am a privileged white, middle-class, heterosexual, American-born woman attempting to serve as a catalyst for change, referencing horrific stories of abuse, neglect, outing, abandonment, and betrayal. What an honor, and, how terrifying.

I hope readers can see the level of care and detail the participants offered, showcased in excerpts within Chapters 4 and 5. I stitched together their stories, along with input from community stakeholders from frontier, rural, and urban communities, to further understand the emergence and maintenance of coercive sexual environments and its impact. The study employs a focus on Kansas girls, but these girls represent others—other girls defeated by the heavy hand of patriarchy in all parts of Kansas, the U.S., and the world. Chapter 6 does not set out to “fix” mechanisms that allow for and even encourage coercive sexual environments. Rather, the significance begins with recognition of a systemic issue. The findings, hopefully, will spark conversation, policy change, and hope.

Each chapter begins with a quote, derived from exemplary works of literature, excerpts from prison and community interviews, or song lyrics. These sections detail field notes and the researcher perspective, all honoring feminist standpoint theory. The author’s prefaces are identified using italics and introduce context for each succeeding chapter.

*To the sluts, hos, burnouts, and bitches, this one is for you.*



## **Chapter 1 - Girls' pathways into the juvenile justice system**

*Imagine: You are 15 years old. Your mother, deep in drug debt, sends you to give a strange man \$10. But somehow you know he expects more – your body. The world judges you as reckless, promiscuous, and inconsiderate of others.  
--Kenjdra, in state custody*

### **Author's preface**

*As of 2017, the state of Kansas found that an overwhelming 80% of youth sent to out-of-home placements were low or moderate-risk youth, indicating they were incorrectly placed into a harsh environment deleterious to their development. As extensive research has shown, more harm than good occurs when the risk-need principle is not adequately applied. The current study explores circumstances of girls who have been inappropriately placed into correctional facilities, examining local influences that may leverage cultural guides into criminal justice practices and policies, an impoverished area of research.*

*Kenjdra (above), is an example of a low-risk female youth who was placed in the state's juvenile correctional facility. (Note: In in this context, "low-risk" refers to a youth with few risk factors known to predict recidivism). Kenjdra was a youth I worked with while employed as a psychologist at the state's only female juvenile correctional facility. The brief excerpt comes from one conversation, spurred by a 12-page document that revealed a 10-year timeline of abusive experiences. She did not enter the facility due to a violent crime. Rather, after being shuffled through more than a dozen out-of-home placements, she was adjudicated for disrespect for authority, sexual "acting out," and a series of other minor offenses. Like other girls faced with a rigid sexual double standard, Kenjdra stepped through the court's threshold of patience, and she was committed to prison for running away from [an abusive] home.*

*After being out of the clinical realm for several years now, my first encounter with Popkin et al.'s (2015) piece on coercive sexual environments immediately took me back to my*

*previous work with girls. I was quickly flooded with memories of abuse, neglect, disadvantage, and oppression. In reflecting on the stories I heard, it was as if they were on repeat. Each girl and her story was unique, but they all found commonality in systems of unfair disadvantage, community players who seemed not to care, and a system that was eager to “lock ‘em up and throw away the key.”*

*This personal experience remained a core motivation in completing the current study. I cannot ignore the literature on Smith’s (1987) standpoint theory and the fact that, just like Tilley (1998), I was unsure if I could complete research on incarcerated girls and women as I present as a white, middle-class, heterosexual woman. Even my ability to bring in an outside laptop and recording device gave me additional material power. I recognized that my position and perspective(s) would vary according to each girl and woman I interviewed. To fully involve myself within the field research, I prepared to engage emotionally. As those before us have observed, a level of emotional response to participants has furthered the interviewer-participant relationship. I acknowledge the complexity of interviewing incarcerated girls and women as well as the ethical tension in establishing an emotional bond. I fully documented these experiences as well as my observations and emotional responses.*

*Given my commitment to standpoint theory and the feminist agenda, the reader will see evidence of the researcher perspective and relationship to the project. Following the tradition of demystifying the research process and negating any claim to pure objectivity, I organize my personal comments through introductions to each chapter, using italics to set it out for consideration. In balance, I utilize empirical and theoretical support situated in firm scholarly work.*

## **Introduction to the study**

Based on previous personal observations as well as prior studies (see Arditti, 2012; Saar, Epstein, Rosenthal, & Vafa, 2015), the pathway for Kenjdra and others in similar circumstances appear to take sharp turns following correctional commitment. Studies have found that youth in out-of-home placements are at a significantly elevated risk of delinquency than other youth (see Ryan & Testa, 2005; Snyder & Merritt, 2014), even though many of these youth come from already-troubled home environments. Regardless, youth with fewer risks to recidivate, based on the risk-need principle, should be exposed to a lower dosage of correctional intervention. Either way, greater restriction is rarely the answer, especially for female offenders (Sherman & Balck, 2015).

Several characteristics emerge that make Kansas an instructive case for evaluating the risk-need principle as applied to youth. Even though Kansas has a youth crime rate lower than the national average, the state ranks fifth in the nation for youth confinement. In 2015, the national average for juvenile incarceration was 152 juvenile offenders per 100,000 youth. That same year, in Kansas, the average was 278 per 100,000 youth (Juveniles in Corrections, 2015; KDOC, 2016). Kansas youth crime has decreased more than 50 percent in the past ten years, yet a substantial proportion (around two-thirds) of the state's juvenile justice budget is spent on out-of-home placements and juvenile correctional facilities. Moreover, overreliance on incarceration for juvenile offenders is not effective. More than half (54%) of Kansas youth who were sent to out-of-home placements were not successfully discharged while 42% sent to a secure juvenile correctional facility were incarcerated again within three years of their release (Kansans United for Youth Justice, 2017).

In general, behaviors that lead girls into the correctional system pose no threat to public safety and thus leave little official justification for incarcerating them (Sherman & Balck, 2015). Opportunities to divert girls into services rather than pulling them into the system are available at many points throughout the justice process (e.g. arrest-detention-disposition), but, unfortunately, gender bias, punitivity, and paternalism channel girls deeper into the system (Abram, Teplin, McClelland, & Dulcan, 2003; Espinosa, Sorensen & Lopez, 2013; Sherman & Balck, 2015). Patriarchy is place and space dependent; it is adaptive, and it instills a sense of fear and creates oppression for girls and women (Enloe, 2017). In turn, entrance into the juvenile justice system often predisposes female youth into the adult criminal justice system (Barry, 1995; Peak, 2015; Rodriguez, 2013; Sickmund, 2004).

Interestingly, many experts agree that keeping low to moderate-risk youth in the community is a better way to hold youth accountable (Kansans United for Youth Justice, 2017), and that a developmental approach would be more effective (Sherman & Balck, 2015) and more likely to prevent further offenses (Andrews & Dowden, 2006). Although Kenjdra's home life created an environment that supported and even encouraged her extensive abusive encounters, her behaviors could have been better addressed with community-level interventions. Instead, her externalizing behaviors (e.g., running away, self-harm, and hypersexual activity), products of her abuse, seemed to catapult her into a pipeline leading directly to the juvenile justice system. In turn, the system deepened her trauma-specific treatment needs. Kenjdra is not just *any* girl; Kenjdra represents many girls who inadvertently find themselves involved with the justice system.

Girls—especially those who have experienced physical and sexual abuse and neglect—are vulnerable to local gendered norms (e.g. girls should not runaway or use drugs) and biases

(e.g. abused girls are damaged), which, coupled with their community's failure to intervene, create a pathway for a life behind bars. The justice system tends to view girls' deviant behavior, which is often different from what is considered boys' deviance, as a product of poor choices, delinquent tendencies, and a continual threat to societal norms of femininity (Bishop & Frazier, 1996; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Sherman & Balck, 2015). Patriarchal-established gender norms and deviations from said norms at the local level results in reprimanding girls, often in the harshest of terms. Further, well-established cultural distinctions of non-urban areas, such as a density of acquaintanceships (Freudenburg, 1986), suggest that gendered effects may be exaggerated in rural areas.

Most criminological literature has focused on boys and men with an “add women and stir” approach to understanding the role of girls and women (Westmarland, 2001). Girls and boys may share common factors influencing their entrance into the system, but less attention has been given to understanding pathways and consequences for girls. We know less about their previous exposure to trauma, oppression, and unfair gender expectations in schools, at home, and in their neighborhoods; many experts claim that community actors are not doing enough to help prevent female youth from entering into the criminal justice system (Juhasz, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Some scholars assert that systems such as education, child welfare, public health, and mental health also have failed to meet needs of girls, instead criminalizing their misbehavior (Sherman & Balck, 2015). In the dozens of placements Kenjdra experienced throughout her life, she was perceived the same way: “What’s wrong with this kid?” rather than, “What happened to this kid?” The current study focuses on what happened to these troubled girls, with a spotlight on local non-metropolitan communities, which has received no attention in scholarly literature.

## **Coercive sexualized environments**

The current study examines coercive sexual environments (CSE), a concept that spotlights spatial disadvantage and sexual exploitation of at-risk girls in non-urban communities. Within this context, “at-risk” is used not in measuring risk to offend/reoffend, but as a term describing a compilation of factors applying specifically to disadvantaged girls (e.g., family-related issues (including generational community status), high poverty rates, abuse, and interpersonal discord) (Anderson Moore, 2006). As Popkin et al. (2015) state, CSEs emerge in communities that are racially segregated, high in poverty and crime, and low in collective efficacy; prior research use these characteristics to refer to urban conditions. In another study, Popkin et al. (2010) document that youth who grow up in such neighborhoods have a variety of negative experiences, including developmental delays, serious physical and mental health issues, earlier sexual exploration, teen parenthood, and greater risk for delinquency (Popkin et al., 2010). Related, Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997), define collective efficacy as, “social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of a common good (p. 918), a reference somewhat more useful in applying the term to non-urban areas.

Coercive sexual environments are known for harassment, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation and violence of girls and women (Popkin, Acs, & Smith, 2010; Popkin, Leventhal, & Weismann, 2010; Popkin & McDaniel, 2013) in their everyday lives (Popkin et al., 2016). For girls like Kenjdra, much of their involvement in delinquency stems from trauma associated with abuse. Smith, Leve, & Chamberlain (2006) observed that 93% of girls studied had experienced sexual or physical abuse, while approximately three-fourths of them experienced at least one of these incidents prior to age thirteen. According to Cernkovich, Lanctot, and Giordano (2008), girls with a sexual abuse history are three times more likely than

boys to become chronic adult offenders. In the same study, the researchers found that girls who had a history of physical abuse as minors were more than six times as likely as other girls to become habitual offenders. For girls who reported a history of both sexual and physical abuse, there was an additional elevation (2.6 times) of becoming a serious offender (Cernkovich, Lanctot, & Giordano, 2008). These findings are consistent with recent research in South Carolina, suggesting that 81% of delinquent girls reported a history of sexual violence, while 42% reported the abuse as occurring within a romantic relationship (DeHart & Moran, 2015). Overall, studies have found that more than one-half of women offenders had a history of sexual victimization (DeHart & Moran, 2015; Tasca, Zatz, & Rodriguez, 2012). All forms of violence and abuse at home are strong predictors of juvenile justice involvement for girls, especially regarding sexual abuse (Chamberlain, Leve, & DeGarmo, 2008; Conrad, Tolou-Shams, Rizzo, & Brown, 2014; Saar, Epstein, Rosenthal, & Vafa, 2015).

A relatively new area of study, CSE research has concentrated exclusively on urban areas. What remains unknown is whether coercive sexual environments exist in non-urban communities, and if so, how they may mimic or diverge from characteristics found in studies of the city. Local place-level effects must inform understanding of CSEs and gender-specific mechanisms that perpetuate disadvantage and violence for girls, and, in turn, how such apparatus may create a pipeline into the juvenile justice system.

Kenjdra's abuse, something outside her control, held her future captive. To understand the abuse-justice process, and to help other girls who are being groomed or thrust into this pipeline, the current study captures voices of those most directly affected, documenting the impact of their lived experiences while investigating how CSEs coincide with juvenile justice policies and practices in non-urban areas.

The current study folds together feminist criminology together with an ecological systems theory and gendered pathways to better understand how coercive sexual environments may disadvantage girls, and whether CSEs coincide with juvenile justice policies and practices in non-urban areas. The following sections review each perspective separately. Following, a conceptual model demonstrates how each is folded into the comprehensive framework for this dissertation.

### **Theoretical framework**

“Theories have real consequences for real people” (Paternoster & Bachman, 2001, p. 9); a powerful statement which was taken to heart in the current research. The role of theory cannot be underestimated when working with any population, including an underserved and oppressed population that has received far too little research attention. The current study explores correctives for the marginalized lives of incarcerated girls and women. The theoretical perspectives integrated within the current study guides the conceptual model (outlined at the end of Chapter 1), as well as the methodological approach and overall facilitation of interview structure with incarcerated girls and young women.

According to Paternoster and Bachman (2001), examining criminological theory is important to, “understand crime and what we need to change, and leave unchanged, in order to reduce crime” (p. 1). The current study would reject the notion that [certain] criminological theories are useful only in understanding *crime*; as this study will demonstrate, it is equally important to understand social mechanisms behind one’s involvement in the criminal justice system, which, for female youth, often stems from childhood victimization (Conrad et al., 2014; Sherman & Balck, 2015). It is both humbling and empowering to have the opportunity to hear



stories of young girls and women to seek out positive change for real people; this sentiment is strongly indicated within feminist criminology.

The notion of theory being used to assess what should change and remain unchanged is especially relevant to the current study, as evidenced by Paternoster & Bachman's (2001) assertion that public policy should be informed and guided by theory. The current study provides insight into active roles that communities play in preventing and responding to sexual violence. The study recognizes exemplary foundational concepts in sociological research, such as social solidarity. A term coined by a pillar of sociological research, Durkheim, social solidarity refers to the ties in a society or community that bind people together as one. In relatively simple societies, the binding agent may be based on kinship and shared values. In more complex societies, cohesion depends on increasingly more numerous and intricate agents, including a division of labor and interdependence of its component parts; this form is typically referred to as organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1997). Although post-industrial society, especially in advanced societies such as the U.S., is commonly described as organized around organic solidarity, some remnants of mechanical solidarity (based on low volume of population and relatively homogeneous characteristics) may remain relevant in rural and/or isolated communities. For example, the rural communities studied in Kansas exhibit a prevalence of agreed-upon norms such as a high premium on religiosity. These considerations, combined with the concept of collective efficacy, partially direct examination of non-urban cultures. Using a multi-dimensional approach— informed by ecological studies, literature on gendered pathways, and feminist criminology—the current study interprets gender-specific mechanisms that perpetuate disadvantage and violence for female youth and adult women in the highest level of state supervised custody, the secure correctional facility; the focus is on those from non-urban areas.

## **Feminist criminology perspective**

A recurrent theme in criminological research is a heavy emphasis on the studying of boys and men to the neglect of girls and women (Acker, 1973; Bernard, 1973; Epstein, 1988; Sprague, 2016). When girls and women have been included in the delinquency literature, it has been generally viewed as an “add women and stir” approach. This approach sees gender as a variable instead of a broader social construct (Chesney-Lind, 1989). Yet, a plethora of feminist studies demonstrate that girls experience culture different from boys (Hand & Sanchez, 2000; Shoop & Edwards, 1994; Skaine, 1996), and that community and societal responses to boys' and girls' deviance is divergent based on the sex of the so-called deviant (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Hunnicutt, 2009; Ross, 1998). Criminology has been wrought with two decided biases: Most studies have been based on urban areas (Popkin et al., 2015; Popkin et al., 2016; Sampson, 2012) and focus on the male experience and assumptions of a male-gendered world (Belknap & Hoslinger, 2006; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Irwin & Chesney-Lind, 2008).

A gendered path into crime for many girls and women stems from an attempt to survive. They may engage in drug use to numb their abusive pasts, engage in prostitution as a product of their sexualized pasts, or involve themselves with criminally inclined boys and men (DeLisi, 2002; Surrat, Inciardi, Kurtz, & Kelly, 2004). The literature is replete with studies that document entrance into the system as a byproduct of abusive pasts, especially for girls (Popkin, Acs, & Smith, 2010; Popkin, Leventhal, & Weismann, 2010; Popkin & McDaniel, 2013). Outcomes typically lead them into status offending behaviors such as running away (Chesney-Lind, 2002; Thornberry, Huizinga, & Loeber, 2004). In some instances, once these behaviors are recognized by the court system, the court may attempt to “protect” them from the evils of the streets, or to teach them a lesson for diverting from gender norms of complacency (Bishop & Frazier, 1996;

Chesney-Lind, 1989; Sherman & Balck, 2015). Although protecting and “teaching them a lesson” are not the only court alternatives, out-of-home placements, including incarceration, are often the end result of a line of choices. Once a female is incarcerated, their symptoms of abuse and maladaptive coping mechanisms are exacerbated (Saar, Epstein, Rosenthal, & Vafa, 2015).

Many scholars who study gender have come to realize that sex differences alone cannot fully explain forms of oppression. According to a leading expert in the field, Hill Collins (2004), “Intersectional paradigms view race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and age, among others, as mutually constructing systems of power” (p. 11). Hill Collins (2009) points out that the intersectional paradigm helps to shed light on how domination is organized and structured differently through diverse local realities (Hill Collins, 2009). Rather, systems of power reflect certain social beliefs, situations, discourses, and forms of oppression (Acker, 1988; Anderson & Hill Collins, 2007; Hill Collins, 1999; Hill Collins, 2015; Kane, 2012). Oppression is comprised of many social dynamics (e.g., gender, race, and sexuality). Intersectionality recognizes that it is not one form of oppression that matters, but that all forms matter; power is embedded in each.

The intersectional paradigm, though complex, depicts deep interconnectedness of social inequalities; many argue that acknowledging such webs facilitates change for the greater good (Connell, 1987). This means acknowledging forms of inequality at the different junctures within the system. Paik (2017) engaged in ethnographic research on the juvenile justice court decision-making process, finding that race, class, and gender divisions affected how judges described and dealt with youth. For example, minority youth were described as troubled and irresponsible delinquents who needed to be punished while white youth were viewed as having mental health concerns which required treatment (Paik, 2017). In yet another juvenile justice system study, focusing on multiple forms of oppression, Ward (2012) noted that Black girls were viewed as

less “salvageable” compared to their white counterparts suggesting that whites are worthier of rehabilitation (Ward, 2012). When backgrounds are held constant, histories of Black girls do not lead to viewing them as survivors of their poor circumstances, but as failing to adhere to gender norms (Belknap, 2015).

A feminist criminology perspective stands crucial to understanding coercive sexual environments and how CSEs influence girls' pathway into the criminal justice system. As one example, Miller (2008) found that more than one-half of girls she interviewed had experienced some form of sexual violence or coercion, and nearly one-third had experienced repeated sexual victimization; said study, like most, assumes certain urban context and disadvantage. For instance, when displacement and urban decay begins to increase, people then invest less stock into the community, resulting in weakened informal control (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Felton, 1997). A recent study found that women’s social location exposed them to various forms of violence (structural, interpersonal, and symbolic) (Dominguez & Menjivar, 2014). The feminist criminology model draws attention to not only individual-level interactions, but also socio-political power associated with gender and other intersectional forms of oppression.

### **Gendered pathways theory**

According to Lawston and Meiners (2014), gendered pathways into crime refers to “ways that physical, mental, and sexual abuse, as well as poverty and substance abuse, come together so that young girls and women end up in prison” (p. 6). It is these factors, and an overall need to survive violence, that have come to be known as gendered pathways to crime (Belknap, 2001). Yet, some suggest that this theory of offending is limited to *certain* girls and women (e.g. targeting communities of color and certain drug laws that disproportionately target Black women) (Lawston & Meiners, 2014). The current study addresses the utility of operating under

the framework of gendered pathways, which incorporates life course development. The pathways framework is also extended by incorporating diversity and intersectional principles, including *place* as an important influence on individual outcomes.

Sherman and Balck (2015) assert that there are many ways that girls' developmental experiences, including those associated with abuse, violence, and deprivation, lead a young girl into the juvenile justice system. For example, the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement sampled over 7,000 incarcerated youth and found that females reported a rate of physical abuse twice that of males (42% of females versus 22% of males) (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010). Researchers also have found that girls living in violent homes exhibit a heightened risk for engaging in delinquent behaviors such as truancy, sexual behavior, running away, and substance abuse (Thornberry, Huizinga, & Loeber, 2004). Such harmful experiences appear to exert a greater impact on girls' reentry as well, clearly suggesting that sexual abuse has a defining impact on girls' involvement in juvenile justice (Conrad et al., 2014).

Scholarship has well established that girls with traumatic experiences tend to become more deeply involved in the juvenile justice system, and these symptoms are often worsened because of being involved in the system (Griffin, 2002; Hennessey, Ford, Mahoney, Ko, & Siegfried, 2004). Again, much less is known about gendered dynamics in non-urban areas, where informal ties are likely to be much denser (DeKeseredy, Donnermeyer, Schwartz, Tunnell, & Hall, 2007; Popkin et al., 2015; Weisheit & Donnermeyer, 2000). A pathways model becomes useful in investigating its application to gendered dynamics within non-urban locales.

### **Ecological theory**

The ecological systems theory is used to help understand complex intersections of social contexts and how those factors shape individual behavior and development (Bronfenbrenner,

1992). Studies supporting how place influences criminal behavior have been around since at least the 1940s with Shaw and McKay's (1942) work on social disorganization theory. Although scholars later introduced community-level variables such as concentration of poverty (see Bursik, 1986), many scholars primarily have bypassed rural locations, producing an urban ethnocentrism in criminology. Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy (2008) suggest that early social disorganization studies are limited as they assume that crime in rural communities is due to a lack of cohesion and solidarity, rather than questioning whether there are various kinds of social and normative structures. Pulling from capstone Durkheimian concepts, mechanical solidarity explains the tendency of smaller communities engaging with one another with a shared sentiment and responsibility while more specialized or populated communities change the interdependencies between people and a weaker collective conscious. These changes within the division of labor alter interpersonal relationships connected through similar work, education, religion, and general lifestyle (Durkheim, 1997). The current study addresses certain similarities and/or differences in community structure within non-urban communities.

Aligned with urban bias, most studies have attempted to understand lives of girls and women who reside in densely populated communities. For example, research consistently displays the relationship between fear of crime and perceived risk, emphasizing how it is ecologically patterned (Cobbina, Miller, & Brunson, 2008). The ecological position of girls and women has been studied in a range of criminological studies (see Cobbina, Miller, & Brunson, 2008; Popkin et al., 2015; Popkin et al., 2016) but few have considered the spatial positioning of girls and women in rural communities. Studies have found that individual communities are organized and experienced as gendered, suggesting that place matters (Cobbina, Miller, & Brunson, 2008; Williams & Craig-Moreland, 2005). Yet, rural crime and control is one of the

least studied social problems in critical criminology (DeKeseredy, Donnermeyer, Schwartz, Tunnell, & Hall, 2007). If place matters, it seems obvious that differences in urban versus rural environments may result in different community cultures, though this is not to imply that rural communities are in complete opposition to urban counterparts. Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy (2008) argue that:

Crime within rural places must be understood in terms of their own social organization and culture and is far more complex than proximity of cities of various sizes, population mobility and differential association with gangs and criminal cliques, although all three remain possible and legitimate factors in a larger and more relative milieu of explanatory variables. (p. 9)

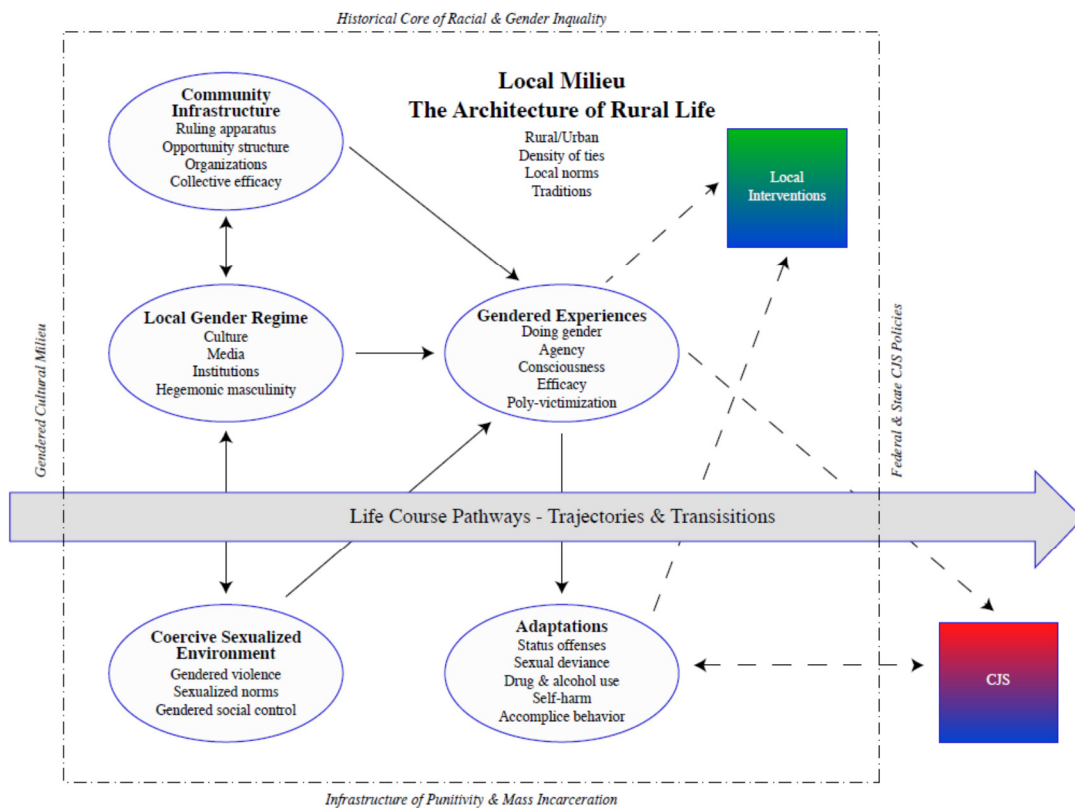
According to Williams and Craig-Moreland (2005), gender norms and expectations in rural communities may be more traditional than in urban areas, but also more mixed. For example, girls may be able to participate in traditional “male” activities (e.g. driving a tractor) but they also remain in a culture that is bound by the “heavy hand of patriarchy” (Williams & Craig-Moreland, 2005, p. 2). Their findings also suggest that rural locale is different from urbanized areas in several ways. Much like patriarchal bargains, as outlined by Kandiyoti (1988), girls and women learn the “rules of the game” in dealing with local patriarchal mechanisms. When girls deviate from gender norms the response is said to be, “more distilled, assuming overstated meaning and, in turn, exaggerated reaction” (Williams & Craig-Moreland, 2005, p. 10). The following conceptual model illustrates graphically how the integration of theories reviewed inform the current study.

### **Conceptual model**

The conceptual model, **Error! Reference source not found.**, is displayed below. It depicts the initial process through which this study was constructed and serves as the foundation of research and data analysis procedure. Note that the model assumes (but does not directly

measure) large historical and structural influences that are demonstrated in the literature as exerting effects on life processes. Societal factors shown to be of consequence to girls and women include the historical core of racial and gender inequality (Miller, 2002; Miller, 2008), gendered cultural milieu (Connell, 1987; Popkin et al., 2015; Popkin et al., 2016; Williams, 2002), an infrastructure of punitivity and mass incarceration (Abram, Teplin, McClelland, & Dulcan, 2003; Booth, Farrell, & Varano, 2008; Espinosa, Sorensen & Lopez, 2013; Sherman & Balck, 2015), and federal and state criminal justice policies (Kingston, Huizinga, & Elliot, 2009). The criminal justice box lies outside the purview of the local community in some respects (e.g. “deep” end of the system, incarceration) but is still subject to the structural milieu designated as larger, environmental influences. Again, these are displayed as outside the purview of direct measurement but provide clues to structural influences.

**Figure 1.1: Coercive Sexual Environment Conceptual Model**





Moving inside the model, one can see that the local milieu—referred to here as the architecture of rural life—sets the environmental backdrop for studying characteristics such as the rural/urban nature of the community (Williams & Craig-Moreland, 2005), a density of informal ties (DeKeseredy, Donnermeyer, Schwartz, Tunnell, & Hall, 2007; Popkin et al., 2015; Weisheit & Donnermeyer, 2005), and local norms and traditions (Connell, 1987; Williams, 2002; Williams & Craig-Moreland, 2005), all of which are considered pivotal to understanding gendered pathways. Next, the model highlights life course perspectives, including trajectories and transitions, as critical to life outcomes of girls and young women (Popkin et al., 2015; Sherman & Balck, 2015). Finally, the model draws attention to two possible and divergent outcomes, local interventions (such as treatment, proactive programs, and prosocial activities) and entry into the criminal justice system.

Social supports, while not a major guiding principle in the current model, carry assumed influential power throughout the entire model. Cullen (1994) has pointed out that social forces are powerful in tearing apart families and communities, leaving youth in less than ideal environments. Critically, this study seeks to understand actual supports supplied by families and communities as well as *perceived* social supports identified by participating young women (Cullen, 1994; Matsueda, 1992). Specifically, scholars have recognized the impact of support from institutions such as schools and faith-based organizations as well as from families (Simons, Simons, Burt, Brody, & Cutrona, 2005), recreational and work experiences, and prosocial peer involvement (Phillips Smith, Faulk, & Sizer, 2013). While families can serve as a social support for girls, some families may collaborate with the justice system to threaten or punish girls for disobedience, sometimes resulting in their removal from the home. Such support mechanisms

vary depending on social location and hierarchies related to race, ethnicity, and class (Davis, 2007). This study attends to further influences based on place-based characteristics.

Different forms of social support may reveal gendered community opportunities, which can include instrumental social supports (e.g. seeking a job) and expressive forms of social support (e.g. close companionship) (Cullen, 1994; ; Lin, 1986; Marsh, Evans, & Williams, 2010). Social supports can occur at the micro-level (e.g. best friend) and informal relations (Cullen, 1994; Vaux, 1988), or through community social networks and formal agencies (e.g. schools). The current model and interview guide assesses all forms of informal and formal social support prior to incarceration, as well as during stents of incarceration and post-release. Specific to juvenile justice involved youth, Craig (2016) found that although the role of social bonds reduced rearrests for both boys and girls, the relationship was significant only for girls. For all incarcerated youth, critical junctures include severed familial relationships, disruptions and changes in the school setting, and, at times, increases in risk to reoffend (due to ignoring the risk-need principle). Additional family strain results as various members learn to cope and adjust to the incarceration of their child or sibling (Rodriguez, 2013).

The remainder of this chapter continues to provide conceptual and theoretical explication for the study of girls and young women involved in the criminal justice system, framing the current research for understanding how coercive sexual environments may contribute to the overuse of incarceration. Individual concepts explicated include structural elements relevant to the conceptual model above and provide a cursory overview. Chapter Two will more fully review empirical literature related to such concepts.

## **Community infrastructure**

The bulk of literature on life-course and place-level studies has been analyzed using male participants in urban areas. In the current study, community infrastructure focuses on ways in which girls, primarily from non-urban places, may share their voices regarding their community culture. The aim is to uncover concepts associated with life course perspectives (e.g. collective efficacy) and community structure (e.g. organizations). Collective efficacy assesses the active engagement by community members and how community members are willing to intervene in youth behavior for the common good (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Sampson and Groves, 1989). Literature on collective efficacy suggests that the regulating of youth behavior should lead to decreases in delinquency (Kingston, Huizinga, & Elliot, 2009; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999), and the current study examines the gendered nature of regulating youth behavior in non-urban places. Although all spaces are gendered, the gendering is different from place to place. The conceptual model allows for an assessment of each girl's community and its organization as based on gender hierarchy.

The model includes gender power dynamics (e.g. ruling apparatus and opportunity structures connected to gendering) specific to community. Dorothy Smith is credited with much of this work and the explanation that social contexts produce certain experiences with oppression (Smith, 1987). The series of questions derived from this part of the conceptual model elicit responses about the gendered structure within communities, a diversity of gender identities, where girls and boys fit into the fabrics of their community, and how boys and girls share the same geographic location but different, and limited, spaces for opportunity.

## **Local gender regime**

A major contribution to the conceptual model is recognition of each community's local gender regime. Gender regime is known as a framework for identifying specific gender meanings that are attached to those specific locations (Connell, 1987; Williams, 2002). The local gender regime is a product of local media, culture, and even place-specific hegemonic masculinity ideals, and at times, broader culture. Hegemonic masculinity is a concept that refers to the social practices, which vary by time and place that men engage in to retain their dominant position in society. In highly connected post-modern communities, the local gender regime will be influenced by larger culture. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), hegemonic masculinity was originally formulated around the idea that it, "embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women and men" (p. 832), all of which is achieved through, "culture, institutions, and persuasion" (p. 832). This, along with other gendered concepts, can readily be seen in different media outlets (e.g. portraying men in war) and throughout all institutions (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Within these contexts, violence has been used as a resource for men in accomplishing their masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1993; Messerschmidt, 1997). This "resource" allows for the perpetuation of broader sexualized culture of girls and women.

Although not all communities, or even all males, are absolute in following the demands of hegemonic masculinity, men position themselves on a continuum as it relates to this ideological construct of being a man; the structure itself places women in a state of subordination (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Many of these concepts (e.g. gender regime and hegemonic masculinity) are time and place specific and vary from one community to the

next, but few have studied the local gender regime in rural communities (see Williams & Craig-Moreland, 2005). It is also the case that fault-lines may be identified within local gender regimes, giving rise to the possibility of structural vulnerability and change (Williams, 2002). Some have studied rural patriarchy as it does not consistently present in the same manner as patriarchy in urban areas, but still dominates local gender norms (see Cohen, 2012; Enloe, 2017).

In the current study, local gender regime focuses specifically on how girls and women experience the local environment and practices with a particular interest in the awareness and characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; Smith, 1987). Masculinity, as a construct, is connected to power but works in various ways specific to local culture. Further, studies have shown that multiple social institutions accommodate and respond differently to gendered norms for girls' and boys' behavior. For example, sexual harassment in schools flourish due to school climate (e.g. allowing inappropriate language and behavior), which negatively affects girls more than boys (Bagley, Bolitho, & Bertrand, 1997; Chiodo, Wolfe, Crooks, Hughes & Jaffe, 2009; Gadin, Hammarstrom, 2005). Gruber and Fineran (2016) found that when assessing school outcomes for girls and boys, sexual harassment is a stronger predictor than bullying, especially for girls. Attention to local gender regime norms elicits discussion on how individuals or groups treat girls' behavior when compared to their male counterparts.

### **Coercive sexual environments**

Most girls and women experience sexism and sexual harassment as everyday occurrences. According to Gruber and Fineran (2016), sexual harassment is directly related to hegemonic masculinity and its connection to power, as well as structural and cultural sanctioned stereotypes about power relationships. Approximately one in two women have experienced some form of sexual harassment during their lifetime (Pina, Gannon, & Saunders, 2009), while

approximately one in four have experienced some form of sexual violence by the age of 18. Girls under the age of 12 make up 15% of all sexual assaults and rapes, while nearly one-half of all female rape survivors report their victimization prior to the age of 18 (Rennison, 2001; Saar, Epstein, Rosenthal, & Vafa, 2015). Hand and Sanchez (2000) found that girls are more likely to perceive harassment as harmful when compared to boys. Studies have found that girls are more affected by sexual harassment, are sexually harassed more often, and are more likely to attempt suicide compared to their male counterparts (Bagley, Bolitho, & Bertrand, 1997; Chiodo, Wolfe, Crooks, Hughes, & Jaffe, 2009; Gadin & Hammarstrom, 2005). Girls' more frequent experiences and severity of harassment render them vulnerable targets for physical and sexual harassment (Hand & Sanchez, 2000); these may occur on a daily basis and are perpetuated by cultural norms.

This section reflects the heart of the current research, and the research focuses on local ideologies toward sexualized norms and gendered violence, especially as perceived by young women. Inquiries include an exploration of local exposure to sexual violence/coercion. The aim is to understand how community ideology and/or exposure to sexual violence/coercion provide a pipeline from victimization to prison. For many juvenile justice-involved girls, participation in offending behavior is usually a cover-up for other serious problems experienced by the girl (Saar, Epstein, Rosenthal, & Vafa, 2015). These victimized girls then enter the juvenile justice system, even though they generally pose little to no threat to public safety (Puzzanchera, 2014).

In most cases, the pipeline-to-prison is a product of gendered social control. Gendered social control describes attempts, often on a daily basis, to coerce girls and women to conform to traditional female gender expectations (Ericsson & Jon, 2006). Research demonstrates that patriarchal power dynamics result in gender stratification within differing institutions (e.g.

families and communities), and that these power dynamics result in gender-specific responses to social control (Booth, Farrell, & Varano, 2008).

Literature on sexual environments is new and decidedly narrow in participant selection, targeting youth living in low-income, high poverty-stricken urban communities. Based on their research, Popkin et al. (2015) created a model focused on broader cultural norms around gender-based abuse, which is combined with elevated levels of chronic violence and poverty and low levels of collective efficacy. Under such conditions, sexual harassment, coercion, and other forms of gender-based violence become normalized for girls and women. Racial segregation creates neighborhoods rampant with poverty, violence, and social disorganization, which is where the brewing of CSEs emerge (Popkin et al., 2015). Yet, all studies on CSEs to date neglect any focus on girls in non-urban communities. The current study uniquely includes girls and young women who grew up in rural America and found themselves within the highest level of secure care, secure correctional facilities.

### **Gendered experiences**

“Make me walk, make me talk, do whatever you please, I can act like a star, I can beg on my knees. Come jump in, bimbo friend, let us do it again. Hit the town, fool around, let’s go party” (Rasted, Norreen, Dif, & Nystrom, 1997). This excerpt from a popular pop music song includes lyrics about undressing the Barbie girl while living in a Barbie world as long as Barbie will always belong to Ken. The notion of typical so-called Barbie girls is that they adhere to mainstream gender norms, norms that encourage glamour, beauty, and sexual submission to men. Since West and Zimmerman’s (1987) pivotal work on “doing gender,” an agency-oriented approach which was introduced thirty years ago, scholars have attempted to explain the process of gendered social interactions. Doing gender sometimes means owning up to socially prescribed

gender norms and engaging in expected gendered behavior. In other instances, it may include actions of resistance to gender norms. Girls also experience being “sexually policed” for violating gender roles. These moral violations are referred to the courts as delinquent acts (Odem & Schlossman, 1991; Wolters Hinshaw, 2013). The literature suggests that girls do gender and deviance in ways different than boys, and sometimes in ways deemed to be against their expected gendered behavior. The "doing gender" perspective, acknowledging ongoing construction and reconstruction of gender, affords an excellent tool for including girls' experiences into research (Miller, 2002; Popkin et al., 2015; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Such experiences vary, based on a spectrum of gender diversity. These gendering processes become most visible at transitions and points of change (Popkin et al., 2015; Sherman & Balck, 2015), aligning well with life course perspective.

Related, group consciousness refers to the awareness of commonalities and shared histories of girls and women, based on their power, or lack of, and position in society. Lack of power, equality, and equity of opportunities negatively affects self-efficacy and is an unfortunate reality for many women. Though an elusive concept, this study chooses indirect ways to measure the influence, and lack thereof, of ways in which the local community encourages or discourages girls and their goals, especially in ways that girls and women access and practice agency in such environments. A lack of group consciousness often reflects a mounting vulnerability to multiple forms of abuse (Blessinger, 2015).

Victimization is an unfortunate but common characteristic among the population of study. Poly-victimization refers to a constellation of ways in which girls and women are often victimized, establishing the gendered pipeline into the criminal justice system (Sherman & Balck, 2015; Smith, Leve, & Chamberlain, 2006); in turn, histories bring to light details such as



long-endured dysfunctional home lives (Levenson, Willis, & Prescott, 2014). Complex trauma typically refers to the simultaneous or sequential occurrence of child maltreatment. The maltreatment can consist of emotional abuse/neglect, sexual and/or physical abuse, and even the witnessing of domestic violence (DeHart, Lynch, Belknap, Dass-Brailsford, & Green, 2014; NCTSN, 2017). The nature of these forms of maltreatment is typically chronic in nature and occurs during early childhood. Complex trauma usually has long-term consequences that are wide-ranging in nature and invasive (NCTSN, 2017). It becomes important first to recognize the face of trauma. Trauma is not just abuse or violence but also witnessing violence as well as trauma associated with different forms of stigmatization (e.g., racism, incarceration and sexual orientation) (Bloom & Covington, 1995; DeHart et al., 2014).

### **Adaptations**

Young women respond to various gendered experiences as they are deeply embedded within the community infrastructure, local gender regime, and at times, coercive sexual environment. For many girls, their responses include engaging in status offenses such as running away and truancy (Sherman & Balck, 2015; Thornberry, Huizinga, & Loeber, 2004). At times, they engage in sexual deviance and drug/alcohol use (Popkin et al., 2015; Popkin et al., 2016; SAMHSA, 2017). Often, such behaviors violate moral norms and are referred to the courts as delinquent acts (Odem & Schlossman, 1991). With limited availability or accessibility to local interventions, girls may engage in self-harming behavior as well as other forms of maladaptive coping (Popkin et al., 2010; The National Crittenton Foundation, 2017).

Imprisoning girls for status offenses is part of a broader historical development where institutions monitor the social and moral behavior of troubled girls (Davis, 2007). Boys and men engage in crime at much higher rates than girls and women, and when girls do offend in serious

crime, it is usually as an accomplice to a man. In many cases, girls and women are further exploited by a male accomplice through the sex trade, drug trade, and other criminal enterprises (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996). Within the court system, some judges have reported detaining girls who run away or commit other status offenses as a means of “protecting” them (Bishop & Frazier, 1996; Sherman & Balck, 2015); the result is almost always harmful and, at best, paternalistic and demeaning.

Exposure to trauma has been known to create a developmental pathway for girls into involvement within the justice system. Some believe this accounts for the fact that juvenile crime rates are declining while the involvement of girls in the system is increasing (Bloom & Covington, 1995; Walker, Muno, Sullivan-Colglazie, 2015), referring to this link as the victimization-to-imprisonment pipeline (see Saar, Epstein, Rosenthal, & Vafa, 2015). For example, studies have found that girls who repeatedly runaway are, in turn, at much greater risk for sexual and physical victimization (Feitel, Margetson, Chamas, & Lipman, 1992; Welsh, Archambault, Janus, & Brown, 1995). Many runaways are running away from forms of victimization, which, in turn, involve them with prostitution and drug use (Zahn et al., 2010; Fagan, Wright, and Pinchevsky, 2013). These scholars found a positive relationship between victimization and substance use when controlling for neighborhood collective efficacy.

Literature on the victim-offender overlap suggests that it is often difficult to draw a dividing line (Berg & Loeber, 2011; Berg, Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2012). For example, Daly’s (1992; 1994) research with women found that pathways to offending can be lumped into typologies of street women (25%), harmed-and-harming women (38%), drug-connected women (15%), battered women (13%) and other (10%), implying that many women offend due to survival needs. In studying female juvenile offenders, studies have also found a relationship

between sexual assault and subsequent delinquent behavior and substance abuse for girls within the juvenile justice system (Dembo, Williams, Wothke, Schmeidler, & Brown, 1992; Jackson, Hanson, Amstadter, Saunders, & Kilpatrick, 2013). Using a set of female youth on probation, Yeater, Montanaro, and Bryan (2015) uncovered a temporal order with increases in substance abuse following sexual assault; this suggests a need to cope with violence. Six-month follow-ups also found that this group was at an increased risk for further sexual coercion, suggesting a need for early intervention.

### **Local interventions**

As the body of literature demonstrates, at-risk girls tend to engage in self-harming behaviors, sexual deviance, drugs and/or alcohol use, or status offenses (e.g. running away) due to a lack of community resources (Arditti, 2012; Cobbina, Miller, & Brunson, 2008; Bryant-Davis, Ullman, Tsong, Tillman, & Smith, 2010; Sherman & Balck, 2015); they tend to experience multiple systems of abuse, drawing attention to institutional failures. For example, DeHart (2009) found that girls located in group homes or long-term commitment placements had been victimized multiple times. They also experienced several adverse childhood events (e.g. caregiver incarceration). Many scholars conclude that institutions such as education, child welfare, public health, and mental health have failed to meet needs of girls and instead criminalize their misbehavior (Popkin et al., 2015; Sickmund, Sladky, & Kang, 2013); typically, these girls are blamed for circumstances beyond their control (Sherman & Balck, 2015). Neighborhoods known for characteristics associated with cumulative disadvantage (e.g. low income) are theorized to then have a decrease in availability for adequate social supports (Zuravin, 1989). In such environments, the “underclass” is truly set at significant disadvantage.

Disadvantaged communities offer little means for recognizing these systems of abuse or in doing anything to help address the trauma. Instead, girls are lost within the fabric of society. They are viewed as deviant, out-of-line, and non-conforming. Their behaviors, left unaddressed, lead them into the court system (Feitel, Margetson, Chamas, & Lipman, 1992; Welsh, Archambault, Janus, & Brown, 1995; Zahn et al., 2010). In turn, some communities embrace many opportunities to prevent girls from entering the juvenile justice system but even when present, resources are underutilized (Abram, Teplin, McClelland, & Dulcan, 2003; Espinosa, Sorensen & Lopez, 2013; Sherman & Balck, 2015).

Privatization of services can also be problematic in identifying at-risk girls. Service availability varies from place to place, and rural communities often suffer from an additional barrier due to geographic location. In July of 1996, the state of Kansas contracted out services such as family preservation, foster care, and adoptive services. This followed a 1993 settlement agreement resulting in a 1989 class action suit in which child advocates claimed that victims of abuse and neglect were receiving inadequate child welfare services (LDPA, 2001; Unruh & Hodgkin, 2004). Unruh and Hodgkin (2004) studied privatization of child welfare services specific to Kansas, which pioneered this approach. Though some support was found (Unruh & Hodgkin, 2004), more than 25 state child welfare agencies were sued or placed under federal court order between 1979 and 2005 (Kosanovich & Joseph, 2005). In Kansas, one could go to [www.ks.dcf.org](http://www.ks.dcf.org) (short for Kansas Department for Children and Families) to file a complaint. In 2016, the Kansas Department for Children and Families was questioned for being a, “Kids for Cash” type of enterprise, citing financial incentive as a motivation for keeping youth in foster care rather than integrating them back into their families (Moore, 2016). At other points in time, the system has also been criticized for lack of placement options (Fox, 2018) and for returning

children too quickly as providers are paid not by a daily rate but a lump sum. Results of the current study will aid local public agencies, state and federal child welfare agencies, legislators, advocacy groups, and courts (Testa & Poertner, 2010) as state holders shape child welfare (Scott, 2001).

### **Criminal justice system**

As mentioned, judges have reported detaining girls who commit status offenses as a means of “protecting” them (Bishop & Frazier, 1996; Sherman & Balck, 2015). In fact, scholars argue that detaining runaway girls represents an effort by the patriarchal system to control girls’ sexuality (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001; Mahan, 2003), something that does not occur for boys. Further, if a youth under supervision of the courts runs away, it becomes a violation of probation and ultimately a crime (Davis, 2007).

To combat some of the above-mentioned issues, the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) has prohibited judges from locking girls up for status offenses; however, it does not prohibit them from locking the girls up for not complying with their court orders (e.g. obeying curfew) (Office of Juvenile Justice, 2015). In a 2012 national study, girls represented 29% of youth who were arrested. Their arrests were generally for offenses that posed **little or no** threat to public safety (e.g. theft) (Puzzanchera, 2014).

Researchers have documented such trend. In 2016, Peck, Leiber, Beaudry-Cyr, and Toman utilized data on court referrals from two Mid-Atlantic states and found that female youth were more likely to be adjudicated as a delinquent when compared to their male counterparts. Girls were more likely to be deemed delinquent due to involvement in probation violations, misdemeanor property offenses and person offenses, and felony person offenses than were their

male counterparts (Peck, Leiber, Beaudry-Cyr, & Toman, 2016). Their findings further support the notion that girls are judged more harshly for their involvement than their male counterparts.

### **Concluding remarks on the conceptual model**

The body of feminist research on youth and coercive sexual environments has made significant strides in understanding impacts on young girls. However, current scholars continue to call for further exploration into the characteristics of CSEs and whether they are common among all neighborhoods and contexts, or if CSEs are specific to only certain areas and conditions. Little is known about the severity across neighborhoods and whether the range of severity differentially affects girls and women residing in those environments, especially in non-urban areas. Thus, to further understand the nature of CSEs, studying different neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage, and with various kinds of local regimes, becomes a critical next step (Popkin et al., 2015). A system of unhealthy relationships, poor or failed social supports, and interconnected institutions of oppression drive girls' behavior, which is oftentimes perceived as undesirable and/or troublesome to their families, communities, and society (Sherman & Balck, 2015); these characteristics are likely to vary by community size and culture. A combination of social control and social supports (Cullen, 1994) are accounted for within the conceptual model.

Furthermore, to the best of this researcher's exploration, no studies have examined the link between CSE and involvement in the juvenile justice system. There are no studies focused on a rural population of female youth and their exposure to CSEs. No studies assessed these issues beyond teen years. That is, no prior research has aimed at understanding the role of CSEs in girls' eventual entrance into the adult criminal justice system, and with no understanding at all of dynamics within rural communities. The feminist perspective demands that we include girls' and women's voices as participants in research, providing direct insight and hopefully

discovering ways to divert most girls from entering correctional facilities. With close attention to experiences of girls and young women, the current study seeks to discover whether CSEs can and do exist in a less populated state, one known for its abundance of rural communities.

### **Working research questions**

The following working questions guide the current research:

1. Do coercive sexual environments exist within non-urban communities? If so, what is the effect on girls and young women?
2. Do coercive sexual environments encourage *deep* (incarceration) involvement of girls into the juvenile justice system?
3. Can we identify a pathway from coercive sexual environments into the juvenile justice system and, ultimately, involvement in the adult criminal justice system?
4. Regarding community resources and practices, do perceptions differ between justice-involved girls and women and those of community stakeholders?

### **Summary and organization**

The evidence is clear on many systemic issues. First, it is well known that greater restriction for offenders is rarely the answer, especially for female offenders (Sherman & Balck, 2015). It is also widely accepted that pathways to prison, for girls, is usually a byproduct of their past traumatic experiences (Popkin, Acs, & Smith, 2010; Popkin, Leventhal, & Weismann, 2010; Popkin & McDaniel, 2013). According to Popkin et al. (2015), broad cultural norms around gender-based abuse combine with elevated levels of chronic violence and poverty and low levels of collective efficacy. Under such conditions, sexual harassment, coercion, and other forms of gender-based violence become normalized for girls and women and coercive sexual environments emerge and flourish (Popkin et al., 2016). With the failure of the education system,

child welfare, public health, and mental health care to meet the needs of girls, their behaviors are, instead, criminalized (Sherman & Balck, 2015). These disparities have been well established within the literature while studying girls who typically live in low-income housing in densely populated cities (e.g. see Popkin et al., 2015; Popkin et al., 2016).

Still, I am concerned by the compounded gendered dynamics that continue to oppress girls and women. Rather than helping them up when they are down, a patriarchal society exerts its male-dominated stance, further pushing girls into cumulative disadvantage. I am aware of the collective markers of CSEs and continue interest in exploring influences based on rural or urban locality, cultural beliefs, systems and institutions, specific neighborhood characteristics (e.g. low income and other disadvantage), and socially constructed inequalities (e.g., low social class, minority status, and sexuality) as they affect girls and women, and their pathways—as utilized by and integrated into state policies—into the criminal justice system.

The current study utilizes a multi-dimensional approach, informed by feminist criminology as infused with ecological studies and literature on collective efficacy and social control. Literature in these areas are reviewed to understand gender-specific mechanisms that perpetuate disadvantage and violence for both girls and young adult women who have been committed to the highest level of state supervised custody, secure correctional facilities. Finally, but most important, the study hears stories, perceptions, and experiences of girls and young women who have borne the brunt of cumulative disadvantage perpetuated by the integration of CSEs and punitive state policies.

In turn, the study aims toward a deep understanding of what occurs at the state and local level about local cultural influence on female pathways into the correctional system. The broader aim of this project is to inform Kansas stakeholders of its findings. I will provide



recommendations for communities on issues related to local culture that may help to combat sexualized coercion, all of which often results in unfair disadvantages for girls and young women. The current study, through a feminist-inspired concept of collective efficacy, establishes a foundation for reexamining local relationships, social inequalities (e.g. racial and sex disparities), and the potential impact on its youth.

Beyond this introductory chapter, the remainder of the dissertation includes five chapters. Chapter two provides a literature review, organized by the theoretical framework that guides the study: principles of feminist criminology, which concentrates on the social construction of gender, agency, and power dynamics; gendered pathways, focusing on a development approach; and an ecological approach with a focus on community level factors (e.g. local gender regimes and collective efficacy). All are, of course, intertwined. This project relies heavily on exploratory qualitative analysis, using a theoretically grounded conceptual model for guidance, of a highly vulnerable but critical population, incarcerated female offenders. Following principles established by feminist scholarship, the study encouraged participants to let their voices be heard, to share their stories of strife and triumph, and to provide those interested in an outlet within which to potentially and significantly change state policies. Chapters four and five provide results at two levels, personal/individual and community/structural, respectively. Finally, a concluding chapter reflects on the full study, summarizing findings, drawing conclusions, and offering recommendations.

## Chapter 2 - Literature review

*Sarah, a girl from rural Kansas, spent her teen years beyond bars. After a history of status offenses, she exceeded the patience of the local judiciary and was sent to the secure correctional facility for a misdemeanor charge. She was released as a young adult with minimal social and independent living skills, and few supports. As local scholars observed, "Some of the worst features of the traditional model of juvenile justice can be seen in a Kansas case involving a female juvenile offender."*

### Author's preface

*Craig-Moreland and Haliburton (2004) shared the above story of Sarah while reviewing implications of a juvenile sentencing matrix in Kansas. As noted in the case above, Sarah was required to remain behind bars for most of her adolescence due to a misdemeanor charge. During the same time, Michael (pseudonym) was committed to the juvenile correctional facility, stemming from a spree of crimes including battery of an elderly woman. While Sarah's misdemeanor kept her behind bars for five years, Michael's felony resulted in a sentence of less than six months. Staff at the facility stated that the outcome was due to overcrowding and also the belief that Michael's brother was the actual instigator (Craig-Moreland & Haliburton, 2004).*

*Stories such as Sarah's are crucial to understanding the lives of young girls and women. I take seriously the feminist criminology position that demands inclusion of those most oppressed; Sarah and girls like her certainly fit that depiction. From the feminist criminologist standpoint, Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the juvenile justice system nationally as well as within Kansas. Patriarchy and the institutionalization of privilege offers a historical review of criminological literature conducted by white, middle-class men and the need for feminist work. Girls like Sarah, from rural communities, remain without a voice. These studies suggest that victimization creates a pipeline into the juvenile justice system, but primarily for girls. A review*

*of the intersectional paradigm is covered, noting many studies of poor, minority girls living in urban communities of disadvantage. Nevertheless, Chapter 2 includes a review of what is known about girls residing in rural areas within the U.S. and how non-metropolitan culture differs in the dealings of girls' behavior. Coercive sexual environments create a culture that supports this victimization, but again, this has only been researched in urban domains. While tedious at times, I have found much support for the idea of victimization/justice pipelines for girls, with the curious and obvious neglect of girls from small places. I hope to remedy this excluded niche in some small way. Finally, the chapter expands upon the four working research questions.*

### **Juvenile justice and gender as context**

Juvenile facilities were first introduced in the United States in 1825 with what were referred to as houses of refuge (Barry, 1995; Peak, 2015). These facilities were founded to strike a balance between those who wanted to see youth offenders brought to justice, and those who resisted incarceration for youth (Peak, 2015). Juvenile corrections began to grow significantly in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The first reform school for juveniles, the Lyman School, opened in 1846. By 1876, there were 51 reform schools or placements open around the United States. Youth were admitted to these facilities for a variety of behavioral concerns including status behaviors, delinquency, and criminal offenses. At this time, the length of stay was determined by the facility administrator(s) (Barry, 1995; McCarthy, Schiraldi, & Shark, 2016). Some citizens were taking note of behaviors leading youth into institutions. Many of these youth were runaways, prostitutes, children believed to lack control by their parents, or children of parents who seemed to lack concern (Gluck, 1997). It was around this time that a movement began by individuals referred to as the child savers (Barry, 1995; Craig-Moreland & Haliburton, 2004). Child savers pushed for advocacy of youth and prevention services in cities (Barry, 1995;

Davis, 2007). They also advocated for a separate court system for juvenile offenders to help authorities intervene in lives of youth and their families (Davis, 2007; Platt, 1969). The first juvenile court was established in Cook County (Chicago, IL) in 1899 (Davis, 2007; Wolcott, 2001) and was said to serve as a surrogate parent to troubled youth (Mears, 2006).

The child savers were also concerned with moral behavior of girls (Belknap & Holsinger, 1998; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). As white middle-class reformers, they were concerned about morals of white working-class girls as well as immigrant girls (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). Girls who did not adhere to appropriate behaviors were labeled as wayward and said to need supervision and control of the juvenile courts, reformatories, and training schools (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Odem, 1995). For the past several decades, scholars have revealed the juvenile court's preoccupation with sexual activity and other labeled forms of immorality (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Odem, 1995; Odem & Schlossman, 1991; Schlossman & Wallach, 1978; Shelden, 1981). In an important move, the federal government enacted the 1974 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) recognizing a separate group of offenders known as status offenders; however, the decline in incarceration rates for girls leveled off between 1979 and 1982 (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). According to the literature in this area, little has changed within the juvenile justice system and its preoccupation with controlling girls' so-called wayward behavior.

In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the juvenile court movement grew significantly. The ruling ideology at that time was that youth could be reformed. By the early 1970s, the Lyman School closed and was replaced by smaller secure facilities focused on community-based services that were seen as more humane than previous institutions. The JJDPA, a landmark piece of legislation, offered grants to states who were willing to remove status offenders from secure

custody (Barry, 1995; Peak, 2015). Status offenses then became a separate category, including youthful concerns such as running away and being truant, as well as other acts that would not be criminal if committed by an adult (Peak, 2015).

Just as the policy pendulum swings, so does the ideology surrounding corrections. Through most of the 1980s and 1990s, a general get-tough-on-crime era became prevalent, especially promoted through political means, and the public's views shifted to a much less sympathetic stance regarding juvenile offenders (Barry, 1995). Incarceration rates rose for both adults and juveniles (Sickmund, 2004), and legislative reforms emerged, designed to make it easier to adjudicate youth within the adult criminal justice system (Barry, 1995). Increasingly, more youth were admitted to facilities, leading to prison overcrowding (Gluck, 1997). Research has also shown that increases in juvenile incarceration subsequently leads to adult mass incarceration (Rodriguez, 2013).

As with the adult system, significant shifts in juvenile incarceration rates emerge as a product of policy choices. Many incarcerated youths are behind bars not for serious violent offenses, but for offenses such as drug and property crimes, probation violations (technical violations) as well as status offenses (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2013). For many minority girls and women, changes in law enforcement, sentencing, and policy have resulted in a "culture of control" that punishes girls and women for deviating from expected norms associated with femininity (Garland, 2001; Steffensmeier, Schwartz, Zhong, & Ackerman, 2005).

### **Systemic contradictions**

During the 1990s, state legislatures began to recognize problems within the juvenile justice system. Community-based services (typically under the umbrella of community

corrections) were in subpar condition and remained mixed with child welfare services. Further debates occurred regarding sentencing guidelines. Kansas was one of six states that operated their juvenile justice system with determinate, or fixed, sentencing. Some argue that determinate sentencing is the product of increased support for a more punitive approach to juvenile justice (see Craig-Moreland & Haliburton, 2004) with the idea of, “same crime, same time” justice. This philosophy contradicts the competing ideology that juvenile offenders often exhibit unique, individual needs.

It was during this era that Sarah, the girl mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, spent her teen years behind bars. It was shortly after Sarah’s sentencing that the Kansas Youth Authority recommended adoption of a sentencing matrix to establish criteria for admission into a juvenile correctional facility. Craig-Moreland and Haliburton (2004) analyzed the admission data before and after implementation of the sentencing matrix for juvenile offenders in Kansas (years 1999-2001). In the three years prior to implementation of the matrix, they found a “substantial” number of females admitted to the juvenile correctional facilities in Kansas, representing 13 percent of all admissions. However, after implementation of the matrix, female referrals to the juvenile correctional facility dropped substantially, falling to eight percent of all admissions (Craig-Moreland & Haliburton, 2004). They further found that 23% of admissions fell below the standards of admission per the matrix; these admissions were slightly more female and slightly more minority than the entire admissions population. These findings suggest that without hard policy implementation, girls were being incarcerated at higher rates and for lower level offenses than their male counterparts. Although the above study observed a decline in female youth admission rates, the informal but firm patriarchal role of the juvenile justice court still holds a strong presence today.

Despite increased rates of girls' arrests and incarceration, data indicate no evidence of an increase in female criminal activity (Espinosa, Sorensen, & Lopez, 2013; Zahn et al., 2010). Ironically, girls and women represent the fastest growing population of inmates (Bosworth & Kaufman, 2012; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Chesney-Lind, 2006), even though girls' delinquent acts occur less frequently and to a less serious degree than those of boys (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006; Zahn et al., 2008). Further, an increase in violent crime convictions for female offenders is not a reflection of increases in violent behavior, but is due to changes in laws and official action (Chesney-Lind, 2003). According to Puzzanchera (2014), many arrests are connected to poverty, as well as issues regarding abusive homes, relationships, and community responses.

In addition to abusive histories and paternalism, some sources cite lack of police training as a partial explanation for how some youth become involved in the criminal justice system. One 2011 study revealed that only two states utilize a police training component that included a focus on youth development, while only eight states provided a best-practices training when interacting with adolescents (Strategies, 2013). These findings suggest that those working with youth on the front end are ill-equipped with knowledge regarding causes of youth delinquency and *how* to successfully intervene.

### **State-level juvenile justice: One Midwestern state**

Kansas, where the current study was located, accommodates several paths that may determine direction once a youth offender enters the juvenile justice system. Following a disposition hearing, a youth can be located to a sanction house or detention, processed through court services, placed in Intensive Supervised Probation (ISP) or Case Management (CM), or be sent to any number of out-of-home placement. In Kansas, these placements include Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF), Transitional Living Programs (TLP), Juvenile Justice

Foster Care (JJFC), Specialized Family Foster Homes (SFFH), Therapeutic Family Foster Homes (TFFH), Emergency Shelter (ES), Community Integration Program (CIP), Youth Residential Center II (YRC), or the Juvenile Correctional Facility (JCF). As of 2016, the YRCs were reported as the most commonly utilized option. A 2014 cost study of the state's Youth Residential Centers revealed that such placements were costly to operate, with approximately one-third of the budget going towards administrative costs. They also found that more than one-half (54%) of youth who were discharged from these facilities did so unsuccessfully (Cost Study, 2015). Unsuccessful disposition was measured by additional sanctions, increased supervision, or additional periods of incarceration. Even more extreme, commitment to the secure juvenile facility in Kansas costs taxpayers approximately \$100,000 to retain a juvenile for a year (Cost Study, 2015). Based on these findings and others, Kansas began significant changes to juvenile services.

Kansas has reported that juvenile arrests had declined by 50% since 2004 but that youth cycled through more facilities. From 2009 through 2014, the state observed a 23% decline in the number of youth that went through the juvenile intake and assessment by law enforcement. Similar deductions were also found in the percentage of court case filings and youth referred to Intensive Supervised Probation (ISP) (Cost Study, 2015). Yet, during the same time period, commitment to correctional facilities increased with about one-fourth of admissions being due to technical violations (Weber & Arrigona, 2015). National data throughout the 1990s (from 1997 to 1999) reported a one percent juvenile incarceration increase while 20 state rates declined or remained stable (Sickmund, 2004).

Still, in Kansas, despite a 50% decline in arrests over the past few years, youth were still spending more time on supervision and cycling through a greater number of facilities, averaging



8.3 out-of-home placements. Youth in Kansas spend longer periods of time under supervision, run from placements more, and spend greater lengths of time away from home, despite a 50% decline in juvenile arrests (year 2004). Although involvement with law enforcement and the courts decreased for youth, admissions into the juvenile correctional facilities increased (Christie & Bowman, 2016).

As part of an extensive revamping of juvenile corrections in Kansas, one of the last two juvenile correctional facilities was closed in 2017. Approximately a decade previously, the state closed two other juvenile facilities (one male only and one female only). As of 2018, all juvenile offenders within Kansas were housed at one maximum security juvenile correctional facility with a 270-bed capacity. The facility houses both male and female offenders between the ages of 10 and 22 (Blessinger, 2015).

In 2015, a taskforce, charged with issues related to juveniles who remain in the community, recommended legislation to address juvenile services. The resulting Senate Bill 367 was supported by a variety of stakeholders, including judges, legislators, prosecution and defense attorneys, and juvenile justice practitioners. A total of 28 organizations signed in support of Senate Bill 367 (Kansans United for Youth Justice, 2017), which provided for an increase in evidence-based services and changes to the decision-making process (e.g., referrals into the system, transfers into the adult system, and lengths of supervision) (Christie & Bowman, 2016). SB367 promoted use of objective structured assessment and decision-making tools to then match placement, supervision, and treatment needs to youth. The end goal is to invest in evidence-based programs targeting supervision and services for the highest risk offenders while doing no harm to low-risk youth.

Some feel that Senate Bill 367 may potentially revolutionize the juvenile justice system in Kansas. As one juvenile justice administrator stated, it is, “forward-thinking, innovative...and is challenging us on many different levels.” Much of the proposed change will lie within communities, with more services available and fewer opportunities to send misdemeanants to the juvenile facility, purportedly to reduce the juvenile facility population long term. Though funding additional services remains uncertain, Senate Bill 367 promises to use savings from reductions in secure commitments to provide evidence-based community programs (Kansans United for Youth Justice, 2017).

None of these correctives directly address gender dynamics. For example, we know that female offenders have higher rates of abuse and greater need for mental health treatment. Yet, as one Kansas corrections staff member indicated, “Mental health treatment and placements are not available, so kids are placed inappropriately and fail repeatedly” (Weber & Arrigona, 2015, p. 38). Shortage of resources is especially prevalent in rural communities. In a study including Kansas youth, Thrane, Hoyt, Whitbeck, and Yorder (2006) studied family factors and community size differences on youth behaviors such as running away, deviant subsistence strategies, and street victimization. They found that abused and neglected youth spent more time at home before running away. The authors concluded that rural environments offered them fewer needed social services than urban communities (Thrane, Hoyt, Whitbeck, & Yoder, 2006). Further, psychiatric disorders among youth offenders are linked to poorer outcomes following release. These outcomes include increased recidivism, suicidality, substance use problems, and further need of psychiatric services (Vermeiren, Jaspers, & Moffitt, 2006). Especially for girls like Sarah, the gendered pathway can turn quickly into a downward spiral.

## **Patriarchy and the institutionalization of privilege**

Following a long history of patriarchal control, criminological theory has largely been based on observations of male offenders by middle-class male scholars. Most early theorists have attempted to explain female criminality by using mainstream criminological findings based on such data. Yet, profiles of female and male offenders vary in many regards (e.g. abuse histories and nature of offending) (Bloom, Covington, 1995). The typical female offender, to a greater extent than males, is socially and economically marginalized with a history of sexual and/or physical abuse which appears to be an instigator for delinquency (Pollock, 1998).

Feminist criminologists continue to develop a significant body of research on gendered contexts, which provides an important critique to the traditional work of criminology, while also centering on women's experiences, a gendered construction of power, and women's voices (DeHart, Lynch, Belknap, Dass-Brailsford, & Green, 2014; DeVault, 1996; Hill Collins, 2004; Reinharz, 1992; Sprague, 2016). Historically, the United States has been a patriarchal society, one that supports existence of male dominance and hierarchy within social, legal, and political environments. As recently as 2017, scholars (see Enloe, 2017) still call into action the recognition of patriarchy. The ruling ideology of patriarchy considers masculinity as more valuable than femininity, wherein its system utilizes an array of social control policies to keep girls and women subordinate to men (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Renzetti & Curran, 1999). When a woman is defined as an exceptional woman, it is because men have labeled her as an “honorary male” (Heisch, 1980). Violence is said to be more prominent in countries that allow for patriarchal masculine ideals (Hattery & Smith, 2012).

Feminist scholars recognize that gender is a primary mechanism for constructing social difference; in turn, difference and “othering” often encourage violence. As one outcome,

interpersonal violence exists along gender lines, with women overwhelmingly the victims. However, feminist scholars underscore that gender is *not* another variable of interest; it is instead, a centralizing agent of defining difference and power. According to Hunnicutt (2009), women's place in social contexts can be developed only by a merged understanding of how patriarchy combines with other forms of hierarchy and domination, including those in local venues. Patriarchy, while existing in all culture, varies from place and space (Kandityoti, 1988). Such a system creates and maintains a cycle of patriarchal systems of power, which then organizes and even encourages violence against women (Hunnicutt, 2009).

### **When victimization is criminalized**

Much of girls' involvement in delinquency stems from trauma associated with abuse, and their experiences are different from that of boys. Espinosa, Sorensen, and Lopez (2013) found gender differences in the impact of exposure to trauma and mental health needs on the developmental pathways of youth and their subsequent involvement in the justice system. Trauma for girls is more often, more severe, and lasts longer.

Further, involvement in the criminal justice system is often associated with deeper embeddedness within the system. Espinosa, Sorensen, and Lopez (2013) examined influence of gender, mental health needs, and trauma on the risk of a juvenile offender being placed out of home. Their sample included youth who received a state-mandated mental health screening between 2007 and 2008 (n=34,222) and came from three urban juvenile probation departments located in Texas. Approximately one-third of the sample was female. They found that for both boys and girls, an elevated score on the mental health screening, especially if it was related to a previous traumatic experience, influenced how deeply juveniles entered into the criminal justice system (Espinosa, Sorensen, & Lopez, 2013). Additionally, Abram, Teplin, McClelland, and

Dulcan (2003) found that female youth were 1.4 times more likely than males to have at least one mental health disorder. Other studies have found that 75% of incarcerated females meet the criteria for at least one major psychiatric disorder (Cauffman, 2004; Russell & Marston, 2009). Although contradictory to most findings, Davis, Fisher, Gershenson, Grudzinskas, and Banks (2009) found that female youth who received services from a community mental health system were arrested at a younger age and more frequently than girls not receiving such treatment. Their explanation is based on a deficit of communication between mental health agencies and the criminal justice system. Either way, girls end up pushed further into the system because of underutilized opportunities to reduce the use of detention and incarceration (Sherman & Balck, 2015).

Girls who experience sexual abuse are often routed through the juvenile justice system because of their own victimization (Conrad et al., 2014). Such practice to detain and/or arrest girls is due, at least in part, to the perception that girls violate conventional norms and stereotypes of “appropriate” feminine behavior (Zahn et al., 2008); often they are deemed to need either protection or correction. Though sparse mention in the literature, some common behaviors have been found to lead girls into the juvenile justice system, including fighting with parents, poor relationships with peers and teachers, and substance use. Many status offenses such as running away and truancy from school are also prevalent in these groups. Further, girls who engage with older/antisocial romantic partners and those who have early sex are more likely to enter into the juvenile justice system. The above listed behaviors are primarily related to trauma and may represent an effort to reassert control over their chaotic environments (Sherman & Balck, 2015).

Girls are often “othered” and portrayed as deserving abuse and violence (Miller, 2008). Girls are often blamed and punished for their “immoral” behaviors, and literally labeled with such terms as “ho” (Smith et al., 2014). Bieneck and Krahe (2011) found that when undergraduates were provided with scenarios, rate of blameworthiness of the victim was much higher in rape scenarios than in robbery scenarios; they conclude bias is due to cultural stereotypes about sexual assault (Bieneck & Krahe, 2011). The presence of violence in disadvantaged neighborhoods also increased the role of victim-blaming (Miller, 2008).

Although each form of victimization may be somewhat unique, widespread patterns reveal that a large percentage of girls and women are negatively impacted by experiences of sexism. Victim-blaming often results in girls and women being locked up; their trauma experiences follow them. A living situation that is insensitive to their environmental triggers, with periods of isolation, sterile surroundings, and even the threat of constant violence, re-victimizes the already-traumatized young women (McCarthy, Schiraldi, & Shark, 2016).

### **Policy and “kinder, gentler cages”**

Increasingly, scholars incorporate the gendered nature of crime, especially in responses to girls’ outcomes. Chesney-Lind (2001) argues that programming for girls remains centered on stereotypical female issues such as teenage pregnancy and sexual abuse for those already in the system rather than focusing on preventative needs for girls at risk. According to Braz (2006), gender responsive programming assumes that prisons consider realities of women’s lives, hence “kinder, gentler, gender responsive cages” (p. 87). The term also refers to the idea that regardless of good intent, incarcerated girls and women remain imprisoned, with virtually every facet of their humanity compromised. Rather, most feminist scholars agree that gender-responsive programming is a reactive attempt to provide assistance to female offenders but fails to address

overuse of imprisonment for girls and women. Root causes should be addressed within communities, targeting culture and agency, and paving way for policy changes that intervene before “cages” are utilized.

One obvious but largely neglected area of study is how imprisonment curtails and often destroys relationships. Many adult female offenders report pain and loss with interpersonal relationships—with family, significant others, and friends—all of which underscores need for therapeutic interventions aimed at women’s relationships (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Owen, 1998; Owen & Bloom, 1995; Pollock, 1998). Family support may lower depression for incarcerated youth overall, but support is a stronger predictor of depression for girls than boys (Johnson et al., 2010). According to Bloom and Covington (1995), gender responsive treatment should incorporate the role of racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression that intersect in daily lives of girls and women, realities to which most of them will return. One promising area includes treatment focusing on empowerment (Bloom & Covington, 1995).

Proactive policies such as empowerment may help prevent the kind of secure commitments for girls that occur due to a lack of available resources but also the lack of recognition and reporting of abuses incurred within a coercive sexual environment (Arditti, 2012; Bryant-Davis, Ullman, Tsong, Tillman, & Smith, 2010; Cobbina, Miller, & Brunson, 2008; Sherman & Balck, 2015). Chesney-Lind (2001) states that successful policies and programs must be designed to protect girls from issues such as physical and sexual abuse to reduce trauma and subsequent issues that occur later in life. Acknowledgement of abuse can, and should, then create a process of protective mechanisms that prevent revictimization (Hamilton & Browne, 1998). Unfortunately, most governmental aid and resources are funneled into reactive programs that focus on after-the-fact treatment (Lind, 2001; Weber & Arrigona, 2015). Although

research is strong on need for gender responsive treatment, most state budget cuts have directly reduced treatment and programming for youth who enter into the criminal justice system (King & Mauer, 2002; Mountjoy, 2004) and almost never address proactive measures.

### **The face of childhood abuse**

It was not until the 1990s that medical professionals began to look at the connection between complex childhood trauma and health outcomes. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) are described as stressful or traumatic events which include abuse and neglect. The first ACE study was conducted in 1998 with an adult sample. At that time, ten forms of childhood adversity were identified as being correlated to chronic disease in adulthood (Felitti et al., 1998). This led to the grouping of the ACEs into three general categories: abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. Overall, researchers found that as ACE scores increased, so did risk; ACEs are strongly related to development of youth as well as a range of health-related problems throughout the lifespan (Craig, Baglivio, Wolff, Piquero, & Epps, 2016). The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA) has created a life perspective of this process; their research (2017) demonstrates a strong relationship between one's ACE score, substance use disorders, and behavioral problems.

It becomes clear that girls in the juvenile justice system demonstrate a profile of childhood abuse, particularly sexual abuse and interpersonal victimization. Juvenile justice-involved girls exhibit a rate of complex trauma (five or more on the Adverse Childhood Experiences scale) two times that of their male counterparts (Saar, Epstein, Rosenthal, & Vafa, 2015). Those with higher ACE scores are more likely to be serious, violent, and chronic offenders (Baglivio, Wolff, Piquero, & Epps, 2015; Fox, Perez, Cass, Baglivio, & Epps, 2015). In a 2014 study, 60,000 youth in Florida's juvenile system were reported to have experienced



ACEs. Nearly half of girls scored higher in ten categories of trauma and abuse while less than 27% of boys reported the same number (Baglivio et al., 2014). These findings are consistent with previous studies assessing justice-involved youth and high rates of trauma (see Berlinger & Elliot, 2002; Espinosa, Sorensen, & Lopez, 2013). Findings also confirm the well-established link between child neglect and risk of juvenile delinquency (Chapple, Tyler, & Bersani, 2005; Kazemian, Widom, & Farrington, 2011).

Since the first ACE studies, scholars continue to find that “[t]he literature is clear that girls in the justice system have experienced abuse, violence, adversity, and deprivation across many of the domains in their lives—family, peers, intimate partners, and community” (Sherman & Balck, 2015, p. 3). Juvenile justice-involved youth with exposure to multiple adverse and negative events also increases risk to reoffend (Balivio et al., 2014; Baglivio et al., 2015; Fox et al., 2015). Very few studies address females’ ACE score and subsequent involvement in the adult criminal justice system (see DeHart et al., 2014), and none examines depth of involvement in the system.

Belknap and Holsinger (2006) encourage research on the combination of interpersonal violence and adverse events. Related, Craig et al. (2016) discovered that ACEs were found to increase both boys’ and girls’ chance of rearrests, and that lower ACE scores, coupled with strong social ties, could reduce rearrests. However, when ACEs surpassed six, the protective nature of social bonds was overruled by the role of the adverse childhood experiences (Craig et al., 2016). According to Baglivio, et al. (2014, p. 13), ACE items should not be studied in isolation as they have “a powerful cumulative effect on human development.”

## **Schools teach more than classroom curricula**

Some studies have focused on the specific role that institutions play in the gendered nature of social control. For example, school disengagement is associated with trauma for girls. Youth create their own social power differentials and peer culture, which stems from hierarchical gender arrangements. These arrangements are learned through observation of other social institutions such as family and neighborhood (Hand & Sanchez, 2000; Shoop & Edwards, 1994; Skaine, 1996), but school remains a powerful influence. Boys are socialized to be tough, cool, and competitive (e.g. sports), while girls are conditioned to be pretty, popular, and sociable (Regoli, Hewitt, & Delisi, 2014). Promotion of these gender norms comes through a combination of doing gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and a broader power structure of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

To this point, non-metro areas have seldom entered the literature. Research on gender norms varies for rural communities, which are reflected in school culture. For example, some have found that the popular image of a rural man is one who works in a physical occupation such as farming with an added interest in hobbies such as hunting (Liepens, 2000). Girls and women are almost always portrayed in a subservient or helping portrayal, contrasted with urban versions of gendered hyper-masculine culture, which typically focuses on gang involvement and subsequent victimization and offending (Zdun, 2008).

Some researchers argue that schools represent hostile environments, especially regarding peer sexual harassment, which frequently occurs in front of adults who do little to intervene (Hand & Sanchez, 2000; Krezmien, Leone, Zablocki, & Wells, 2010; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Charmaraman, Jones, Stein, and Espelage (2013) found that many school officials believed that sexual harassment takes place only between two adults, negating any role of intervention

(Charmaraman, Jones, Stein, & Espelage, 2013) among students. Other studies have found that local hegemonic masculinity and broader gender role norms engender staff to be more accepting of sexual harassment, often blaming girls for sexual promiscuity (Chambers, Van Loon, & Ticknell, 2004). “In fact, schools serve as hotbeds for cultivating sexual harassment experiences and tactics that children, adolescents, and young adults carry into their adult settings” (Hand & Sanchez, 2000, p. 720). Sadker and Sadker (1994) found that sexual harassment in schools flourishes, especially in a climate that tolerates inappropriate language and behavior, as well as interpersonal violence. Such climates may lead adolescent boys to perceive forms of harassment as “natural” male behavior. Especially for girls, school behavior may be linked to peer relationships, which then leads to truancy and other school-based problems.

Gadson (2017) asserts that “the politics of gender, race, and class are present within and outside of schools, and are pivotal issues raised in the policies and practices of schooling” (p. 12). In particular, girls of color from low-income neighborhoods often receive more punitive school disciplinary practices, which, in turn, leads to underachievement (Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015). Girls with the darkest skin tone, compared to those with the lightest, are three times more likely to receive suspension (Hannon, DeFina, & Bruch, 2013). According to Sherman and Balck (2015), some believe that harsh school discipline policies have created a “school-to-prison pipeline” where girls are being referred directly to court for predictable adolescent girl behavior (e.g. disrupting class and talking back) (Krezmien, Leone, Zablocki, & Wells, 2010). From an intersectional perspective, Black girls are more vulnerable to schools that act as feeders to the juvenile justice system; they are suspended at a rate six times higher than that of white girls (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Due to a multitude of influences, including racism, sexism, and classism, Black girls may adopt loud and defiant behaviors, which

often lead to discipline in school (Juhasz, 2013). Further, Black girls are disciplined differently and are often punished for nonconformity to white, middle-class femininity standards (Gadsden, 2017; Juhasz, 2013; Morris, 2012; Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015). Similarly, Black and Latino students are overrepresented among those expelled or suspended. In turn, different forms of inequality dictate quality of schooling and ultimate life experiences (Gadsden, 2017).

### **Blurred boundaries**

Von Hentig was the first to present the concept of the victim-offender overlap in 1948. He argued that some offenders were passive in their exposure to violence and offenders, thus contributing to their own exposure (Von Hentig, 1948). The current study does not support the idea that victims contribute to their own victimization, but recognizes agency to make decisions and changes in their lives, even for young girls. In fact, the very actions a girl may take to control her own life (e.g., truancy, running away), are often the same acts that are governed and, at times, criminalized. Certainly, girls and young women may be drawn into a cycle of harm due to their previous exposure to violence, though their choices are also constrained by cultural and structural forces around them. Overall, the interpretation of “free agency” is much different than work by some scholars such as Wolfgang (1958).

Community-level factors as well as broader cultural norms influence victim-offender overlap, though studies have addressed this relationship almost exclusively in urban settings. Although the study of victimization and criminality are usually understood as two separate domains, it can be difficult to understand one without the presence of the other (Lauritsen, Sampson, & Laub, 1991). Some studies on victimization have focused on individual-level explanations. For example, the lifestyle/routine-activities theory provides an individual-level explanation for victimization, suggesting that certain lifestyles and/or behaviors are more

inviting of crime and victimization (Lauritsen & Laub, 2007). However, the balance of empirical research does not support the notion that lifestyle characteristics increase the probability of victimization (see Haynie & Piquero, 2006; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990). Scholars such as Lauritsen and Laub (2007) and Berg, Stewart, Schreck, and Simons (2012), have questioned neighborhood social processes that influence this relationship. Specifically, little is known about the victim-offender overlap within non-metropolitan locations.

### **Intersectionality**

Most gender scholars agree that gender alone cannot fully explain forms of oppression. Rather, *systems* of power result in certain social beliefs, situations, discourses, and forms of oppression (Acker, 1988; Anderson & Hill Collins, 2007; Hill Collins, 1999; Hill Collins, 2015; Kane, 2012); this body of scholarship refers to the intersectionality of such differences. Intersectional research examines many layers of identity and gender diversity, and how certain intertwining forms of identity mold experiences and, in this case, marginalization of certain at-risk populations. Typically, layers of difference include gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ableness, and class. Notable scholars who focus on intersectionality within criminology (see Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Maggard, Higgins, & Chappell, 2013) recognize that intersecting identities occur at the personal level, the cultural level, and the structural or institutional level (Lowery, 2017). Points of difference are not merely additive but complex, intertwining, and dependent on other situational factors. Various formations of identity then affect how girls experience their social contexts and, ultimately, how they respond.

Racial categories have become one of the most prominent in studies of intersectionality, defining historical and structural processes for both individuals and societies (Hill Collins, 2010); it remains critical in studying various configurations of oppression (Bettie, 2003; Hill

Collins, 2015). Recent research supports consistent findings that minority youth are disadvantaged in the juvenile justice system. For example, Rodriguez (2013) found that Black and Latino/Latina youth were more likely than white youth to be sent to secured correctional confinement. These findings mirror other studies of racial biases in the juvenile justice system (see Engen, Steen, & Bridges, 2002; Kempf-Leonard, 2007; Rodriguez, 2010). Studies have shown that minority youth are overrepresented in correctional confinement; Sickmund (2004) reported that in 1999, two-thirds of all youth in public and private correctional facilities were minorities. Lower-class Black youth are less likely to be processed informally compared to their middle-class white counterparts (Bishop & Frazier, 1996; Miller, 1996), while they are more likely to be removed from their homes (Leonard & Sontheimer, 1995; Wu & Fuentes, 1998).

Such findings support other research that race and social class both play a role in court officials' decision making. For example, court officials may judge parents' ability to help supervise their youth when they come from economically strained or disadvantaged communities (Bortner, 1982). Using assumed social class as a yardstick, some court officials may seek forms of incarceration to ensure treatment needs are met (ignoring the risk-need principle) (Bishop & Frazier, 1996; Bortner, 1982). Such forms of oppression differentially affect girls, especially those from disadvantaged communities. According to Sherman and Balck (2015):

Intersectionality makes it clear that just as a system designed for boys will not meet the needs of girls, a one-dimensional approach to all girls will also not be effective. Rather, responses must employ an intersectional lens and be tailored to the needs of individuals, based on an informed, nuanced understanding of girls' identities and experiences. (p. 23).

Girls who live in poverty also demonstrate higher rates of substance abuse, pregnancy, school drop-out, and a range of emotional and social challenges. Certainly, poverty is a risk factor for juvenile justice system involvement (Bright & Jonson-Reid, 2008; Jenson, 2009).

Studies have shown that the well-being of young women is improved when they move out of the high-poverty neighborhoods (Ludwig et al., 2011). There is also support that these environments are experienced differently for boys and girls, especially as they enter adolescence. Other studies have found that economic composition of a community has “tremendous influence over the workings of the court” (Bortner, 1982, p. 171). In a classic ethnographic study, Emerson (1969) found that the juvenile court system places a heavy emphasis in their decision-making process based on youth and family-related factors, and others have found that status of a “good family” exerts positive influence within the juvenile justice system process (Bridges & Steen, 1998).

As stated, a neglected area of study in juvenile justice is the importance of place-level influences. Drawing attention to the paucity of scholarship in non-metropolitan areas, DeKeseredy, Donnermeyer, Schwartz, Tunnell, and Hall (2007) argue that a binary gender construct, as opposed to awareness of gender diversity, specifically marginalizes rural women, an area deserving of much more attention. They refer to these women as those who have suffered in silence. Just as MacKinnon (1979) referenced with sexual harassment, silence and invisibility of an issue does equate with an assumption of nonexistence. Even less attention has turned to girls and young women. As recently as 2017, a *Feminist Criminology* article (Lowery, 2017) urges researches to address the lack of understanding regarding race, the social construction of gender, and other forms of social inequality within the juvenile justice system.

### **From inner-city ghettos to country pastures**

As Deller, Amiel, and Deller (2011) assert, “The empirical ecological criminology literature is vast and richly interdisciplinary” (p. 683). As established, place-specific criminological theories have studied boys and men in urban areas, omitting women in general and specifically those from rural areas. One of the first and now classic cases of social

disorganization, conducted by Shaw and McKay (1942), studied boys' activities in the Chicago area to map out crime. Although they continued their work into the 1970s, their samples consisted of all lower-class male youth from urban locations. They found that social disorganization was composed of a lower socioeconomic status (SES), an ethnically/racially heterogeneous community, especially in areas with disrupted or broken family homes and high residential mobility.

As one of the longest standing criminological theories, social disorganization has undergone several transformations. Some 40 years after Shaw and McKay's seminal work, Bursik (1988) argued that the focus on crime and delinquency was dependent upon the ability of the community to regulate themselves (Bursik, 1988) and introduced victimization into the equation. A few years later, Sampson, Raudenbush, and Felton (1997) followed with the concept of collective efficacy, a term capturing social cohesion among neighbors and their combined willingness to intervene for the common good (Sampson, Raudenbush & Felton, 1997). Rose and Clear (1998) noted that communities with ethnic heterogeneity are more likely to include high mobility, which also results in less connection and formed bonds. In turn, fewer connections mean less trust and investment in the community, lower levels of informal social control, and reduced collective efficacy (Kingston, Huizinga, & Elliot, 2009; Steenbeek & Hipp, 2011). The remaining section on ecological criminology will discuss the role of gendered social control and collective efficacy within rural communities.

Social disorganization theories have remained in canons of mainstream criminological theory and also retain several limitations. One major criticism is that original studies testing social disorganization theory relied heavily upon urban areas (Osgood & Chambers, 2000; Osgood & Chambers, 2003), with mixed findings on generalizability to rural studies. Osgood



and Chambers (2000; 2003), some of the first scholars to look at social disorganization within rural communities, claim that their findings align with core logic of social disorganization studies, referring to rural communities as the “laboratory” for studies of poverty on community disorganization. Bouffard and Muftic (2006) later confirmed similar findings by uncovering a relationship between violent offenses and residential instability and family disruption.

Despite commonalities, some scholars question overall generalizability of social disorganization within rural contexts. A common finding that strays from social disorganization literature is a negative correlation between poverty and crime (see Bouffard & Muftic, 2006; Osgood & Chambers, 2000; Osgood & Chambers, 2003). A second major criticism is the omission of certain characteristics relevant to rural areas, such as differences in the socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. white male populations), underdeveloped measures of population, and thematic contradictions (Edwards & Matarrita-Cascante, 2011). Others challenge the sheer notion of “disorganization” to describe communities who organize “differently.” That is, community structure and culture may vary significantly; however, population size alone cannot fully account for this difference. Donnermeyer (2015) points out that places are not homogeneous in social control, noting diversity among people and levels of contestation, and criticizing the use of secondary data (e.g. census data) to clearly articulate ways in which rural communities organize. Related findings were reported by Adams (2013), finding that those living in urban areas, primarily in areas known as slums, were more vulnerable to violence than their rural counterparts. Adams (2013) also criticized the contention that all communities engage in traditional mechanisms for social control, economic sustenance, and communal local governance.

In a recent study, Dominguez and Menjivar (2014) found that women's social location exposed them to various forms of violence (structural, interpersonal, and symbolic). They argue that structural violence is deeply embedded within both families and communities, leading women to blame themselves for their victimization (Dominguez & Menjivar, 2014). The authors assert that gender is an organizing feature for disadvantaged urban neighborhoods, and that boys and girls engage in differing levels of neighborhood life and involvement, exposing them to more or less deviant behavior (Cobbina, Miller, & Brunson, 2008). For example, when girls are on the streets, others are likely to see their visibility linked to vulnerability, leading to increased levels of victim-blaming. These girls are "othered" and seen as deserving violence. Eventually, they become desensitized and tend to turn blame inward (Miller, 2008). Discourses often organize around the "ideal" victim (Christie, 1986; Walklate, 2011) and the importance of girls and women avoiding risk, staying safe, and taking other measures to ensure their own safety (Fanghanel & Lin, 2017). As Fanghanel and Lin (2017) assert, "risk is also a deeply gendered and subjective construct, and its cultural relationship to the policing of sexuality and vigilance over preserving appropriate femininity should not be underestimated" (p. 345).

Neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage represent a risk factor for chronic sexual harassment and fear of sexual violence (Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010; Popkin et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2014). Sexual harassment then puts young girls and women at a greater disposition for experiencing intimate partner violence and emotional abuse as well as delinquency (Chiodo, Wolfe, Crooks, Hughes, & Jaffe, 2009). According to the U.S. National Violence Against Women Survey, childhood victimization was one of the strongest indicators in explaining intimate partner violence for women (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Burton's (2014) ethnographic

study found that women living in poverty were more willing to accept certain relational situations due to their partner's contributions to the family's financial needs.

As almost all studies find, women are much more likely to be victims of domestic violence. For example, Johnson, Leone, and Xy (2014) studied what they refer to as intimate terrorism and situational terrorism. They defined intimate terrorism as the coercive controlling violence that most people refer to as domestic violence. They found that most of the intimate terrorism was perpetrated by husbands, though situational violence was perpetrated about equally with wives and husbands, but primarily due to self-defense on the part of the wife (Johnson, Leone, & Xy, 2014). Muftic, Finn, and Marsh (2015) found that many victims later turned to domestic violence in response to fear, stating that many of these women are arrested as offenders even if they were defending themselves (Muftic, Finn, & Marsh, 2015). For girls, their violent tendencies may be the product of gender hierarchies and daily patriarchal structures that disadvantage girls (Brown, 2003); related is marginalization experienced by race and class oppression (Miller, 2001). Under such conditions, girls may attack other girls for gender-specific name-calling such as "slut" or "bitch" (Morash & Chesney-Lind, 2009).

Rural literature in criminology is scant. Almost all signature criminological studies have included people and places located in urban areas. Although much literature exists on ecological criminology, few studies address a rural setting (Deller, Amiel, & Deller, 2011). It was not until 1993 that ecologically based theories began to take on a rural focus (see Seydlitz, Laska, Spain, Triche & Bishop, 1993). Work by Liepens (2000) provides a conceptual model for understanding rural studies. She first describes a community as exhibiting "temporally and locationally specific terrains of power and discourse" (Liepens, 2000, p. 30); concepts such as gender regime align with this definition while focusing on gender norms. These elements include people, meanings,

practices, and spaces and structures. The four elements influence social and cultural structures as places change and local networks emerge. Patriarchy, with mechanisms place dependent, exerts demands on gender norms differently in rural and urban locals. Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy (2014) identified patriarchy as being place specific—a form of learned behavior which varies by location, including rural communities.

Early studies have suggested that rural life is known for both positive and negative features. Positively speaking, rural communities are known for their pastoral life, honesty, individualism, and overall religiosity (Willits, Bealer, & Timbers, 1990). Negatively speaking, rural communities may be romanticized (Tickamyer & Duncan, 1990) while the rate of poverty is consistently higher than urban counties since the 1960s (Economic Research Service, 2013a). While Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy (2014) point out that understanding community dynamics is not a rural-urban dichotomy; however, they identify how rural communities with high collective efficacy and density of acquaintanceships may inhibit intervening, reporting, and even acting ethically by professionals such as law enforcement (Donnermeyer & DeKeseredy, 2014).

Studies have suggested that small communities, or those isolated from other communities, present with a somewhat distinct cultural value system. A system based on a lack of outside resources and social and spatial isolation may more likely legitimate and tolerate crime and delinquency (Sampson & Wilson, 1995). The social climate is said to be more personal (Feyen, 1989), with marked suspicion of outsiders (Barnett & Mencken, 2002; Weisheit & Donnermeyer, 2000). As Becker observed, outsiders are labeled as those who deviant from the established group norms—both formal and informal. Deviance is not a quality of a person, but rather a process in which to respond to behavior (Becker, 1963). A person may be a member based on spatial location but socially, they are labeled as strangers (Simmel, 1908). A divide

emerges between the outsiders/strangers and those socially accepted; these concepts are particularly relevant to non-urban communities. In a recent example, one study assessed attitudes of rural police officers and found that protecting the community from outside forces is very important. To the contrary, the mentality of “us versus them” is not observed in urban policing studies (Contessa & Wozniak, in press).

Rural communities are further characterized by anonymity from others but also privacy due to closer social ties and more reliance on informal social controls as compared to their urban counterparts (Websdale, 1998). The density of acquaintanceships leads individuals to “work out interpersonal agreements” (Freudenburg, 1986, p. 31). Regarding interpersonal violence (IPV), data suggest that people in rural communities may be less willing to help IPV survivors because “everyone knows everyone’s business,” and reputations are at stake (Edwards, Rodenhizer-Stämpfli, & Eckstein, 2015). According to Donnermeyer (2015), neighborhood-based norms may constrain residents from reporting crime to formal authority, even when collective efficacy is high. One example related to strong personal ties includes norms against “snitching.” Prior IPV research has found that positive support from those around survivors helps with their psychosocial adjustment (Sylaska & Dewards, 2014; Ullman, 2010). Likewise, when informal and formal helpers respond with victim-blaming attitudes, survivors are negatively impacted (Campbell, Ahrens, Sefl, Wasco, & Barnes, 2001; Ullman, Starzynski, Long, Mason, & Long, 2008). According to DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009), knowing one’s neighbor makes rural citizens more likely to side with perpetrators than survivors. Additionally, some view gender-based crimes as personal matters, to be dealt with inside the home (Rennison, Dragiewicz, & DeKeseredy, 2013).

Dense ties and acquaintanceship result in small communities that deal with issues on an individual, informal basis. When issues such as sexual assault arise, if a victim is willing to seek services, studies have found that rurality negatively impedes on this process. Geographical accessibility is a major difference for rural and urban victims, and fewer services exist for rural victims, who may also have to travel quite a distance for help (Borders & Booth, 2007; Brems, Johnson, Warner, & Roberts, 2006). Additionally, if victims decide to take legal action, which is rare in rural communities, they report longer police wait times due to their isolated geographic location (Logan, Evans, Stevenson, & Jordan, 2005). Close interpersonal relationships and knowledge of community members also generates concerns about privacy, confidentiality, and stigma associated with receiving certain health related services in rural areas (Leston, Jessen, & Simons, 2012; Logan, Stevenson, Evans, & Leukefeld, 2004; Sexton, Carlson, Leukefeld, & Booth, 2008).

### **Coercive sexual environments**

Popkin et al. (2015) represent leading scholars in understanding the impact of coercive sexual environments. To date, this concept addresses the sexual exploitation of at-risk girls in urban areas. Findings suggest that living in racially segregated, high-poverty, and high-crime communities with low levels of collective efficacy, harms children's life outcomes (e.g., mental health, school attainment, and physical health). Reviewing data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) experiment with Moving to Opportunity (MTO) for Fair Housing Demonstration, these authors conducted subsequent qualitative studies to further understand how boys and girls fared after relocating from highly disadvantaged communities. They found that adolescent girls fared unexpectedly better in terms of mental health and engagement in risky behavior than did boys. Their subsequent analysis found that differences in

neighborhood safety mattered for male and female youth. Extreme poverty and high-crime communities, for girls, coupled with sexual harassment and fear of sexual violence, were found to explain the original findings (Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010; Popkin, Leventhal, & Weismann, 2010). Others have found that the MTO initiative also lead to overall significant reductions in violent juvenile offending (Ludwig, Duncan, & Hirschfield, 2001). The ability to move out of low income disadvantaged neighborhoods has a significant impact on offending as well as victimization and improvements in health-related outcomes.

These same authors then explored three additional components from the MTO Final Evaluation Survey to include perceptions of neighborhood violence and disadvantage, unwanted sexual attention, and mental health outcomes for girls. This research showed that young females living in chronic fear of sexual harassment and violence (including rape) suffered more negative consequences on their mental health (Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010; Popkin, Leventhal, & Weismann, 2010; Smith, Gallagher, Popkin, Mireles, & George, 2014). From these findings, Popkin et al. (2016) hypothesized that removing the threat of sexual safety and fear of future threats accounted for improved outcomes for the young girls who moved from the distressed neighborhoods. However, the MTO and qualitative data did not allow Popkin et al. (2016) to develop a measure of CSE within neighborhoods.

Popkin and colleagues recently developed and tested a scale to operationalize and measure neighborhood level CSE (Popkin et al., 2016). Their conceptual model is a product of not just broader cultural norms about gender-based violence, but also a combination of elevated levels of violence and poverty with low collective efficacy and what they refer to as “perceived powerlessness” in distressed communities. “In these circumstances, sexual harassment, coercion,

and gender-based violence become normalized, perhaps undermining the life chances of young women and girls” (Popkin et al., 2016, p. 4).

Research supports the idea that girls and boys respond differently to the effects of chronic disadvantage (Popkin et al., 2016). Several studies have looked at the experiences of youth who come from communities known for chronic disadvantage. For example, Anderson (1999) found that boys in these communities felt pressured to act according to the code of the streets. This code required overt attempts to display toughness and demand respect (Anderson, 1999). Almost a decade later, Cobbina, Miller, and Brunson (2008) found that when studying African American youth residing in a high-crime community, boys maintained respect and attempted to avoid gun violence while girls attempted to avoid being victimized.

Popkin et al. (2016) deserve much credit for the added magnification on the issue of coercive sexual environments and young girls. The current study proposed a model that focused more heavily upon gender dynamics (e.g. doing gender and gendered social control), rural gender norms (e.g. local interpretations of hegemonic masculinity), and adaptations (e.g. running away) to which girls gravitate. These adaptations are either met by local interventions (e.g. mental health services) or are funneled, mostly improperly, through the juvenile justice system. Once girls enter the system, it is believed that they typically return to their coercive sexual communities, largely trapping girls in a cycle of abuse and court involvement.

### **Summary**

Chapter 2 provides a review of existing literature related to the juvenile justice system in the United States and the role of the system in shaping lives of young girls. In the early days of juvenile corrections, houses of refuge were created to act in the role of the parent, as a means of protecting youth. Nationwide, and specific to Kansas, girls were observed to be incarcerated for



less serious offenses than boys. The patriarchal court system often sought to “protect” girls by incarcerating them for their responses to victimization (e.g., using drugs and running away). During the 1990s, Kansas moved to the use of a sentencing matrix in an attempt to ensure that only those who needed incarcerated were sentenced to prison. While juvenile crimes rates have been on the decline for several decades, Kansas youth continue to be incarcerated at higher rates than most of the U.S.

Pathways for girls into prison are different than that for boys. Incarcerated girls report much higher rates of victimization and come from oppressed conditions where communities have failed to intervene. Once in the system, prisons offering gender-responsive treatment are reactive approaches to needs of girls and young women, never preventative. Girls need support within all community institutions and specifically within schools, where a blind eye is often turned to the sexual harassment and assault of girls, encouraging a culture supportive of the sexualization of girls and women.

Previous studies on incarcerated girls and women have analyzed those living in urban areas of concentrated disadvantage. Few have studied community effects on girls residing in rural communities. Rural communities are believed to develop a somewhat unique sense of values and culture. In a community where “everyone knows everyone’s business,” informal control mechanisms influence a reluctance to intervene. Understanding cultural differences between urban and rural domains is crucial to understanding potential variances in the emergence of coercive sexual environments (CSE). CSEs are known to emerge when collective efficacy is low, and poverty, violent crime, and other forms of cumulative disadvantage are high. These environments allow for the sexual harassment of girls and women, instilling an environment that ignores such crimes.

Chapter 2 ends with a review of the working questions as presented in Chapter 1. The review provides a brief excerpt of literature to further explicate the grounding of each question.

### **Review of working research questions**

#### **Do coercive sexual environments exist within non-urban communities? If so, what is the effect on girls and young women?**

The body of feminist research on youth and coercive sexual environments has made recent strides in understanding typical characteristics of CSEs, but none has examined non-urban communities. Current scholars continue to call for further exploration into the characteristics of CSEs and whether they are common amongst all neighborhoods and contexts, or if CSEs are specific only to certain areas. Little is known about severity across neighborhoods and whether the range of severity differentially affects young women residing in those environments. Systems of poor or failed social supports, interconnected institutions of oppression, and interpretations of gender norms may be significantly different in rural areas. The current study provides direct evidence and insight into rural-area influence and strategies to divert most girls from entering correctional facilities (DeHart et al., 2014; DeVault, 1996; Hill Collins, 2004; Reinharz, 1992; Sprague, 2016).

#### **Do coercive sexual environments encourage *deep* (incarceration) involvement of girls into the juvenile justice system?**

The current study of CSEs stands as first to involve girls and young women who are incarcerated. The question of deep involvement in the juvenile justice system calls for a gendered pathway analysis, exploring gendered dynamics of coercive sexual environments in rural communities. The conceptual model for this research provides theoretical and methodological guides, constructing a pathway model that integrates several known conditions

that expose girls to high risk—exposure to complex personal trauma, coupled with a local climate that may endorse views (directly or covertly) that support gender-based violence as well as environmental factors that may interfere with one's social and emotional development (Sampson & Laub, 1990). The study addresses perceptions of justice system-involved young women as well as reports from community stakeholders.

**Can we identify a pathway from coercive sexual environments into the juvenile justice system and, ultimately, involvement in the adult criminal justice system?**

According to Cernkovich, Lancot, and Giordano (2008), girls with a sexual abuse history are 334% more likely than others to become chronic adult offenders. In turn, entrance into the juvenile justice system predisposes female youth into the adult criminal justice system (Barry, 1995; Peak, 2015; Rodriguez, 2013; Sickmund, 2004). Although scholars assume a gendered pathway into the correctional system, no studies to date have researched the role of CSEs in entrance into the adult criminal justice system. This study potentially yields data to be shared with state policy makers; these efforts are a critical component for feminist methodology, which calls for supporting women through social change (DeVault, 1996).

**Regarding community resources and practices, do perceptions differ between justice-involved girls and women and that of community stakeholders?**

While the heart of the research focuses on lived experiences of girls and women, the current study also utilized community stakeholders to garner perceptions of professionals within rural communities. Views of community workers help to further support or reconsider responses of incarcerated girls and women.

Reinharz (1992, p. 248) eloquently summarizes feminist research in the following quote, serving as inspiration for the current study:

Making the invisible visible, bringing the margin to the center, rendering the trivial important, putting the spotlight on women as competent actors, understanding women as subjects in their own right rather than objects of men—all continue to be elements of feminist research.

Chapter 3 details the methodology developed for the current study, including in-depth interviews, descriptive statistics at the community level, observation, and field notes. Other considerations include ethical issues associated with prison research, emotional involvement in research, and analysis of qualitative data.

## Chapter 3 - Methodology

*Qualitative methods...places primary value on complete understandings, and how people understand, experience and operate within milieus that are dynamic, and social in their foundation and structure. -Tewksbury, 2009, p. 39*

### Author's preface

*According to penologists, prisons are “intense, risk-laden, emotionally fraught environments” (Liebling, 1999, pp. 163-165). Much like Tewksbury’s (2009) quote above, prisons also incorporate a local milieu that is dynamic and social. I agree with the intense and emotional nature of conducting prison interviews within a microcosm that reflects but also often departs from an “outside” community milieu. Face-to-face interviews and observations are deeply personal in nature. For some, “prison” elicits a sense of fear. Following the guidelines of in-depth feminist research, I found I was much less fearful of the inmates than I was of my ability to listen to, and speak to, voices of interviewed girls and women. There was a deliberate attempt at relationship building with participants, a willingness to convey my subjectivity, and intentional work to break down power dynamics and language barriers (Swartz, 2011). Before interviewing the girls, I first pre-arranged a six-hour trip to introduce myself, giving them an opportunity to see who would interview them, to ask questions, and to hopefully see the interview process as potentially positive. For the adults interviewed, both the inmates and I walked into the interviews blindly and navigated unknown terrain together. Still, the private setting allowed us to develop some rapport and common goals.*

*I recognized that I was not completely free of bias when it came to my viewpoint on what was said or not said during the interview (DeVault, 1990; Smith, 1987; Swartz, 2011). I could not ignore the emotional labor that came with interviewing a vulnerable population on an emotionally provocative subject involving sexual experiences. I documented my own emotional*

*reactions and interpretations of encounters with participants within my field notes as I recognized that my own view impacts the findings. I made concerted efforts to remain in the researcher role while my internal dialogue, at times, pushed me into psychologist mode. I constantly reminded myself that I was there to hear their stories and relay their messages. I was not there to provide them with treatment. The two roles coincided through the goal to serve as a messenger between their stories and policy makers.*

*I knew I had a limited window of opportunity to serve as this vehicle for change as access and availability to participants is sparse. Researchers who seek to conduct research with inmates face many barriers. Aside from time and travel involved, researchers are also subjected to thorough background checks, adherence to dress codes, lack of access to proper technical equipment, and even searches prior to entering each facility (Bryne, 2005; Waldram, 2009). Simply clearing the project and entrance into the facility once does not translate to easy access with subsequent visits. I encountered many of these issues along the route of data collection. Like comments by Goodman (2011), I too, experienced entrance into prisons as a process rather than a moment. I engaged in quite lengthy negotiations to bring my state-issued laptop into the juvenile facility as a means to take the best field notes possible. This also served as a tool for audio recording back-up. After nine requests to bring in the laptop, I was finally granted permission. After ten e-mails, two voice mails, and one phone call later, post project approval, I was finally granted access to the facility. I knew my time was precious and my mission important.*

### **Chapter 3 framework**

Young women experience victimization locally. Scholars call for studies at the individual and structural levels that influence both victimization and criminality; the current study

addresses the dual approach to understanding young women's experiences in their home communities, where local culture influences exposure to risk and disadvantage. For example, Williams (2002), in a New England study, found that gendered characteristics of the local gender regime uniquely influenced girls' life trajectories. One community guided femininity through a working-class structure, expecting its girls to work hard and marry early. Twenty minutes away, the other community directed its girls through activities and highly-educated role models. More recently, Dominguez and Menjivar (2014) found gender a strong organizing feature for disadvantaged urban neighborhoods, leading to different interpretations of risk for boys and girls. When girls were on the streets, others saw their visibility linked to vulnerability, leading to increased levels of victim-blaming and "othering." Unfortunately, we understand little about how such mechanisms work in non-urban communities, and this study seeks to address that void.

Chapter 3 outlines the overall methodology for the study. The *Epistemological framework* section focuses on feminist criminology and the need for rich qualitative research in fully understanding a vulnerable population such as incarcerated girls and women. This section also provides sample questions as they align with the theoretical approach and conceptual model. The next section, *Early methodological considerations*, further elaborates on the feminist perspective necessary to engage in quality qualitative work while understanding limitations such as ethical considerations. Following, *Research sites* provides an overview of Kansas as well as the Topeka Correctional Facility and Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex, the two prisons utilized for inmate interviews. Furthermore, the *Interviewing girls and women* section outlines the sampling and data collection methods for inmate interviews. Specific attention is given to purposive sampling. *Interviewing community actors* offers an explanation and process for engagement of interviews with community stakeholders. Community professionals were used as

a source of secondary data to further understand community characteristics and triangulate additional perspectives, which may support or diverge from that of incarcerated girls and women. Finally, *Data management and analysis* provides an outline for overall methodological considerations, use of open-coding, and software assistance in interpreting findings, later presented in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 3 ends with a discussion on the overall theoretical perspectives, methodological approach, and goals of the current study.

### **Epistemological framework**

Reinharz (1992) argues that feminism is not a singular research method but a perspective using a wide range of methods. Methods in this study are guided by feminist theory and challenge non-feminist scholarship. The aim is to create social change by representing all human diversity (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004; Ramazanoglu, 2002). As others have noted, past research discourse has focused almost solely on positivism and statistical evidence (MacKinnon, 1979; Sprague, 2016); traditionally, a methodological hierarchy places “pure,” rational-based research as more legitimate. Feminist methodology critiques the assertion that only positivist-oriented, rationally justified research provides insights into social sciences (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004; Ramazanoglu, 2002; Sprague, 2016). Hooks (1984) and Smith (1990) agree, asserting that excess focus on academic intellectualism (with a male-oriented bias toward so-called “hard” evidence (Sprague, 2016) leaves a huge void in understanding lived experiences of girls and women.

One issue with the positivist method is objectification of participants (Hill Collins, 2009; Chafetz, 2004). Feminist criminology avoids such pitfalls by consciously attempting to bypass a power hierarchy between researcher and participants (Andersen & Hill Collins, 2007; DeVault, 1996; hooks, 1984; Reinharz, 1992; Ridgeway, 2011; Sprague, 2016; Ross, 2017). The



researcher is not invisible in the process but serves as a voice for interested participants (Harding, 1991; Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004; Marshall & Rossman, 2006); doing so is extremely important as many girls and women do not just speak differently, many times they do not speak at all (MacKinnon, 1979; Smith, 1987).

With a feminist foundation, the full methodological strategy focuses on the best interests of girls and women while providing them an outlet to share their experiences (DeVault, 1996) and generating a sense of empowerment for those involved (Ross, 2017). Avoiding external incentives to participate, I hope that participants benefited from their ability to share their needs and their opinions (Nama & Swartz, 2002; Swartz, 2011) on improving the criminal justice system for girls and women; these contributions are especially important, as those incarcerated lack the power to pursue such interests independently. Additionally, simply listening to young people can serve as a primary intervention and a form of giving back (Swartz, 2011). For example, one question asks: *If you were a person in charge in your community for one day, what would you do that you would hope would help improve the lives of young girls?* Such interview questions are designed to elicit unobstructed viewpoints, reflecting their lived experiences.

Added to personal reflections, I also considered the need to unpack biographical, contextual, and structural factors (Daly, 1998; Kruttschnitt, 2016), all of which may be extremely sensitive for vulnerable participants. For example, other studies have documented a history of abuse (Cernkovich, Lanctot, & Giordano, 2008; Miller, 2008; Pollock, 1998; Sickmund, 2004) and lack of community resources that may create a pipeline for girls into the juvenile justice system (Arditti, 2012; Bryant-Davis, Ullman, Tsong, Tillman, & Smith, 2010; Cobbina, Miller, & Brunson, 2008; Sherman & Balck, 2015). Further, many girls respond by running away (Sherman & Balck, 2015; Thornberry, Huizinga, & Loeber, 2004), engaging in self-harming

behaviors, and other forms of maladaptive coping (Popkin et al., 2010; The National Crittenton Foundation, 2017).

In the current study, young women discussed their communities in terms of available jobs and various daily activities, providing a measure of social capital similar to research by Deller, Amiel, and Deller (2011), who inquired about the number and quality of different organizations within a given community. Other questions target culture surrounding gendered social control of girls' and boys' sexual acts and how community members respond to such. Research has shown, for example, that daughters are subject to more surveillance than sons, creating different expectations (Hagan, Gillis, & Simpson, 1985); such practices are found to support boys' acts of sexual harassment and violence while conditioning girls to submission and tolerance (Sadker and Sadker (1994; Hand & Sanchez, 2000).

While personal interviews with girls and young women are central to the current analysis, the current study also goes directly to local professionals, gauging how non-urban communities respond to known forms of abuse. For example, I asked: *Sometimes kids can get in trouble for what is called a status offense. A status offense is something that might be against the law for minors but not for adults. For example, being truant from school is a status offense. What do you know about how this works and what happens to a student who is truant from school?* This and other dialogue assist in assessing community reactions, while also remaining vigilant for gender distinctions.

Each element of the research guides was designed to explore characteristics associated with coercive sexual environments in rural communities. Popkin et al. (2016) found that when communities exhibit low collective efficacy, high incidence of violence and social disorder emerge; this trend, combined with limited access to basic amenities, is associated with the

development of coercive sexual environments. These scholars developed a set of seven items to be used with adults and eight items on the youth version to assess participant perceptions of CSEs. The construct variables included adult perceptions of levels of violence, neighborhood victimization, neighborhood social disorder, adult and youth perceptions of neighborhood trust and engagement with neighbors, and youth exposure to neighborhood violence and victimization. With a rural focus, the current study acknowledges validation of the scale and utilized it as a critical guide but defaulted to questions more specific to a rural population. For example, rather than asking participants to report the number of times they witnessed a certain crime firsthand (or heard a gunshot, for example), the current schedule focused on one's simple awareness of crime in their community.

### **Early methodological considerations**

The current study interviews incarcerated girls and women from frontier and rural communities in Kansas, creating an avenue for understanding their personal experiences while working within a feminist criminology perspective. Girls and women are omitted within traditional research, ignoring their stories while forming policy recommendations that direct their lives. To further understand characteristics associated with non-metropolitan communities, professionals who work with youth were also interviewed, affording widespread perceptions and opportunities for young women. The work is deeply qualitative.

Although early theorists from the Chicago School produced well-known ethnographic studies, such as Whyte's *Street Corner Society* (1993 [1943]), quantitative methods soon gained strong prominence in criminological research. Qualitative methods became second choice. When feminist criminology entered the field around the 1970s, qualitative methodologies emerged once again as more informative for in-depth studies of oppressive conditions (Reinharz, 1992;

Sprague, 2016). Qualitative methods offer an enhanced understanding of the research with a rich and deep appreciation for the subject matter and especially for participants in the process (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995; Tewksbury, 2009). The ideological mechanisms of patriarchy had left girls and women invisible (DeVault, 1996), and feminist research brought women to the forefront as they strategize how to survive (Kandiyoti, 1988). Yet, limited qualitative work has been conducted on girls and women within correctional facilities (Jewkes, 2013).

A field especially challenging to enter for in-depth study, research on incarcerated women is particularly thin. Although the U.S. leads the world in incarceration, the prison population is largely misunderstood and under-researched (Liebling, 1999). Considering punitive policies such as the war on drugs, burgeoning facilities, and severe program cuts (McCorkel, 2013), few would doubt that prison research poses significant ethical risks (Gillespie & Sinclair, 2000; Overholser, 1987). Many have called for more qualitative prison research (e.g., Simon, 2000), recognizing that such work can result in significant procedural and public policy changes (DeVault, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 2005a; Shaw, Wangmo, & Elger, 2014), while recognizing obstacles to the prison environment (Ferrell, Hayward, & Young, 2015).

Added to the challenge of entering prisons, conducting research on juvenile justice-involved youth poses multiple legal and ethical standards (Wolbransky, Goldstein, Giallella, & Heilbrun, 2013). After laying groundwork for prison access, hurdles lay in institutional processes including oversight at the university level and within the Department of Corrections. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) application at Kansas State University, with Dr. L. Susan Williams as principal investigator (PI) and myself as co-investigator, was pursued and awarded during the fall of 2017 (Appendix D). The IRB required a full committee hearing, which

included a community member to represent prisoner interests. The Deputy Secretary of Kansas Department of Corrections (Appendix E), as well as personnel in both facilities, reviewed the protocol and approved access to these vulnerable populations. All incarcerated girls at KJCC were asked to give their own assent and consent to the interview and access to their medical records (although medical records were not reviewed).

Access was facilitated by not only institutional cooperation but also through longstanding relationships that became apparent throughout the process. For example, the PI has maintained 20-plus years of connections and experiences with KDOC and the university IRB, while I relied on contacts and experiences as a former employee of KDOC. We recognize, and appreciate, the full support of all involved parties as they have granted access to populations that are highly protected as human subjects, susceptible to undue coercion, and, for juveniles specifically, unable to give official written consent as they are under the custody of the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) (Appendix F and Appendix G). Without trust and cooperation from these parties, this study would not have been possible.

Given responsibilities bestowed through the institutions involved, the methodology incorporates a range of protective factors related to the highly vulnerable populations. Not only are we dealing with incarcerated and age-specific populations, but also the participants face questions about sexual coercion, harassment, and violence. As referenced in Chapter 1, Smith's (1987) standpoint theory was not forgotten during the data collection stage. While it is my obligation to include these young women as full participants, the procedure is not simple or straightforward. Like Spender's (1985) discussion on "woman talk," my singular position as a woman does not mean that I can truly appreciate or understand participant experiences (1985), and further does not negate an imbalance of power (DeVault, 1996). For example, as a

heterosexual, white, middle-class woman, I may not fully appreciate the lived experiences of non-heterosexual, non-white, lower-class participants' experiences (DeVault, 1996; Hill Collins, 1992; Ingraham, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Swartz, 2011). Rather, the researcher and the participants are positioned differently; we must acknowledge that researchers speak and hear differently based on distinctive experiences of power and oppression. Yet, there is promise that, with careful attention, researchers and participants can learn from one another and appreciate differences (DeVault, 1990).

The remainder of this chapter outlines multiple layers of methodological strategies, including: (a) description of research sites, including background of Kansas, two correctional facilities, and rural communities; (b) sampling and interview procedures for individual-level interviews; (c) sampling and procedures for community-based interviews; and (d) analytical procedures.

## **Research sites**

### **The State**

Kansas, the Sunflower State, is a Midwestern state located in the U.S. heartland, known for its Great Plains agriculture. As of 2016, the total population of Kansas was 2.9 million citizens; the entire state is home to about the same number of people as Houston, Texas. Kansas is a conservative state, heavily Republican-voting with 44.4% registered as Republican (State of Kansas, 2016), and consists of mostly white residents (86.6%). Thirteen percent of Kansans live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017a), and 17% of kids qualify as “poor” (County Health Rankings, 2014a). According to a 2014 Pew Religious Landscape Survey, 76% of Kansans report their faith as Christian. Kansas prides itself on its composition of small towns, ranking 15<sup>th</sup> in surface area but 35<sup>th</sup> in population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017b). One can easily be directed

from the official state website to another called *Love Small Town America* ([www.lovesmalltownamerica.com](http://www.lovesmalltownamerica.com)).

The state of Kansas oversees eight adult facilities (seven male and one female) and one juvenile correctional facility (both male and female). As of April 18, 2018, Kansas incarcerated 8,995 men, 912 women, 170 male youth, and 10 female youth. According to Joe Norwood, Secretary of Kansas Department of Corrections, the incarcerated juvenile population has decreased from an average of 345 in fiscal year 2011 to 219 in fiscal year 2016. Error! Reference source not found. provides data for incarceration rates within the ten selected counties for juvenile offenders. In 2016, adult facilities observed a slight decline, due to changes in how good-time credit was awarded (KDOC, 2016). Except for 2018, the Kansas adult prison system has shown a steady increase in admission rates (8,638 in 2008 to 9,803 in 2017). Since that time, the women's prison is at capacity with 912 of 915 beds filled; a recent report projects it will be soon be over capacity (Kansas Sentencing Commission, 2017).

**Table 3.1 Juvenile Incarceration Rates by County (2010-partial year 2018)**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Incarc. Rate*
Cedar										
Male	0	0	2	1	3	0	0	2	2	0.19
Female	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0.09
Mableton										
Male	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0.15
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Kelley										
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Staley										
Male	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.08
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Grady										
Male	0	3	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	0.40
Female	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.10
Stokes										
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Randall										
Male	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.16
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Green										
Male	5	7	4	9	5	13	3	8	4	0.64
Female	1	2	4	2	1	0	3	0	0	0.15
Samson										
Male	92	87	66	60	63	65	59	47	33	0.09
Female	8	6	9	4	2	8	3	12	6	0.009
Jonesburg										
Male	29	30	20	22	22	18	14	14	17	0.15
Female	3	1	1	1	3	2	3	0	0	0.01

All community names are pseudonyms.

\*The incarceration rate was based on a rate of 1,000 youth.

### **Topeka Correctional Facility**

Historically, women were held at the Kansas State Industrial Farm near Lansing, Kansas; the most common charge was for “lascivious conduct,” (which does not necessarily mean prostitution) (Janovy, 2017). The Topeka Correctional Facility (TCF) was then built and open in 1970; the complex includes a historical structure once used for African American technical



education (KDOC, 2016). Beginning in 2001, all women are admitted into the same facility regardless of the severity of their offense, length of incarceration, risk level, treatment needs, or other factors. In 2016, Norwood, appointed the second female warden to oversee the facility. Prior to the current warden's appointment, local newspapers (e.g. *The Topeka Capital-Journal*) reported the prison to be full of contraband as well as guard-to-inmate bribes and sex trade arrangements, and even prison rape, resulting in the pregnancy of an inmate. In a 2012 letter to the Governor, the Civil Rights Division (2012, p. 1) concluded that, "TCF fails to protect women prisoners from harm due to sexual abuse and misconduct from correctional staff and other prisoners in violation of their constitutional rights." A U.S. Department of Justice investigation culminated in a settlement with TCF for failure to protect the incarcerated women (Newton, 2015). TCF and the U.S. Department of Justice have an agreement allowing for oversight of compliance conditions (Cadue, 2016). The two most recent wardens are credited with significant improvements in administration of the facility.

### **Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex**

The Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex (KJCC), formerly referred to as the Topeka Juvenile Correctional Facility, was established in 1879 as a reform school and the state's first institution for juvenile rehabilitation in Kansas. KJCC houses individuals as young as ten years of age to as old as 22 ½ years of age. Under Kansas State law, youth can remain in the custody of the Kansas Department of Corrections until they reach the age of 23 (KDOC, 2016). The earlier construction consisted of cottage-style units, but in 2001 a new concrete-style secure facility replaced the residential buildings. In early 2018, the KJCC superintendent stepped down following an alleged battery citation (Dulle, 2018). The facility is located on 60 acres in Topeka,

Kansas, within a secure perimeter fence; the atmosphere is stark and grey. KJCC is funded to operate a total of 235 beds (Cadue, 2017).

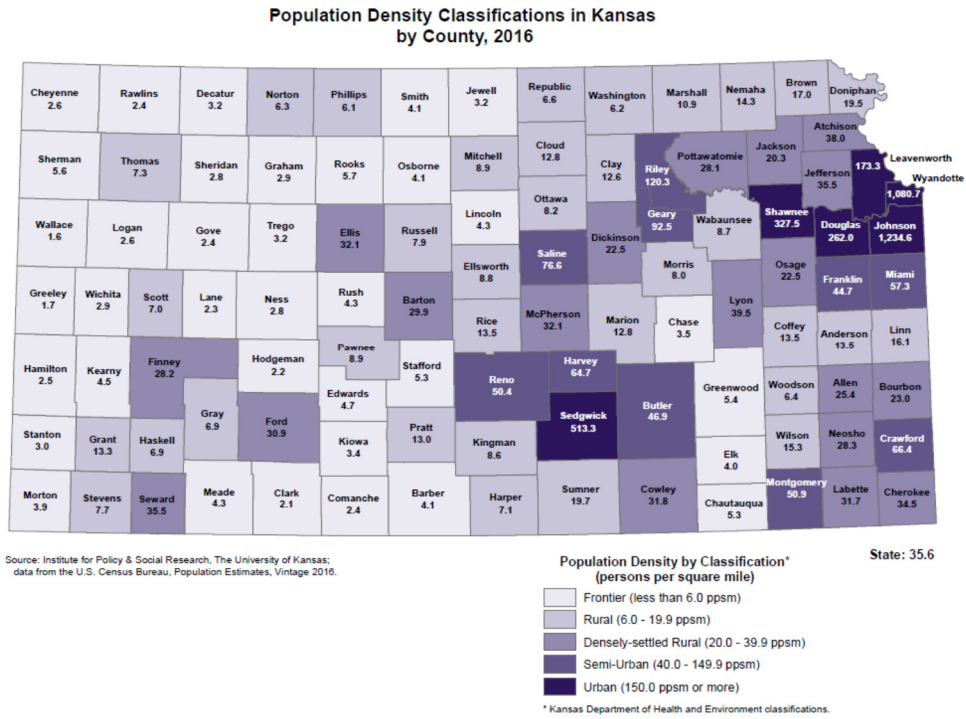
The stories of incarcerated girls and women are crucial to further understanding rural community dynamics, and further data collection included speaking directly with community actors in small-town communities. In considering representative Kansas counties to include in the community-level interviews, I consulted with Dr. Elaine Johannes, associate professor and extension specialist at Kansas State University, who has extensive experience in working with Kansas communities; expert interviews are common in some forms of qualitative work (Mayring, 2003). Previously, Dr. Johannes provided community-based services to older adults and their families in 18 counties as the director of community services for the North Central-Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging. In that capacity, she also established a rural housing authority and a housing rehabilitation function for the agency. In ongoing communication, Dr. Johannes provided valuable information for selection and classification of Kansas communities for this study. A key component of expert interviews involves the interviewee's knowledge about the facts of the community as well as their informed opinions (Yin, 2003).

Results of consultations with Dr. Johannes considered several southeast Kansas counties and the significant role mining plays in the jobs of residents. Southeastern counties exhibit elevated levels of substance abuse and poverty, suggesting some characteristics known to be associated with CSEs. Also in consideration, three counties in southwest Kansas afford sampling of a region isolated from any urban center. Several northwestern counties were designated as "frontier," where basic necessities such as water have become an issue. When looking at northwestern Kansas counties, other issues were considered such as incoming gun-rights organizations, contributing to a growing hyper-conservatism. Finally, the process identified

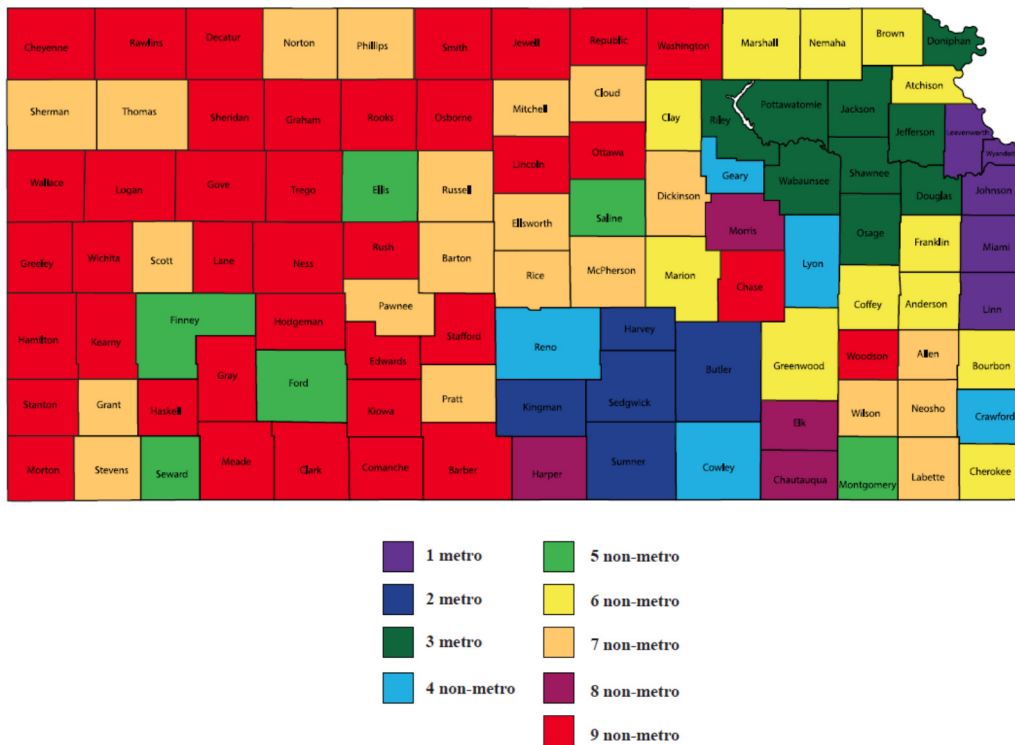
one county known for its aging population, which may hold different norms regarding gender and youth culture.

The U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates (2016) population density chart was used in the final consideration of targeted counties. This chart (Figure 3.1) breaks down the 105 Kansas counties into five categorizations based on the number of persons per square mile (ppsm). The Kansas average is 35.6 (Densely-settled Rural) persons per square mile, of which 36 are considered Frontier, 34 are Rural, 19 are Densely-settled Rural, ten are Semi-Urban, and six are Urban (The University of Kansas, 2016). The categorizations based on persons per square mile was compared with the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service's Rural-Urban continuum codes for Kansas (2013a). Metro to non-metro classification ranges from 1-9 (1=most metro; 9=most non-metro) (Figure 3.2). With 105 total counties, 18% are metro and 82% are non-metro (Economic Research Service, 2013b). A third and final source used in the consideration of county selection was based on the Health Resources and Services Administration's Federal Designated Medically Underserved Areas and Populations information.

**Figure 3.1 Population Density Classification in Kansas by County, 2016**



**Figure 3.2 U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural-Urban continuum codes for Kansas**



After consideration of expert experience and several classification systems for Kansas, ten Kansas counties were selected with an intentional effort of targeting counties from each side and corner and of the state. **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** displays the final selection of the ten Kansas counties. The table provides a pseudonym for each county as well as the population density classification based on the three published classification systems.

**Table 3.2 Breakdown of Ten Counties**

<b>County</b>	<b>U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates</b>	<b>Rural-Urban continuum codes</b>	<b>Federal Designated Medically Underserved Areas and Populations</b>
<b>Kelly</b>	Frontier	Non-metro	Medically underserved
<b>Staley</b>	Frontier	Non-metro	Medically underserved
<b>Stokes</b>	Frontier	Non-metro	Medically underserved
<b>Grady</b>	Rural	Non-metro	Not medically underserved
<b>Randall</b>	Rural	Non-metro	Medically underserved
<b>Mableton</b>	Rural	Non-metro	Medically underserved
<b>Cedar</b>	Densely-settled rural	Non-metro	Medically underserved
<b>Green</b>	Semi-urban	Non-metro	Medically underserved & low income
<b>Samson</b>	Urban	Metro	Medically underserved & low income
<b>Jonesburg</b>	Urban	Metro	Not medically underserved

To speak in more general terms, and to increase confidentiality of responses, the ten counties were then separated into three main clusters, based on several demographic factors. Three clusters help to analyze responses from the perspective of frontier, rural, and urban identification. Additional factors included overall population size, population change from 2010 to 2017, percentage of persons under 18 years-of-age, percentage of persons over 65 years-of-age, percentage of kids living in poverty, number of recognized mental health providers, and overall violent crime rate.

After considering each of these variables for all ten counties, Cluster 1 consists of three frontier counties (Kelly, Stanley, and Stokes), Cluster 2 is comprised of four rural counties (Grady, Randall, Mableton, and Cedar), and Cluster 3 represents the three urban classified

counties (Green, Samson, and Jonesburg). The use of clustering, again, seeks to minimize issues related to confidentiality. The three county cluster demographics are displayed in **Error!**

**Reference source not found.**, which displays means for each of the seven demographic variables, as well as the state average. Further, juvenile incarceration rates for the ten counties were calculated, based on state juvenile incarcerations from 2010 through 2017. Combined averages for each of the three clusters is represented within the final column. Overall, this table provides a snapshot of demographic differences for the three clusters.

**Table 3.3 Cluster Demographics**

	Population average	* Population change	**Persons under 18	**Persons over 65	**Children in poverty	***Mental health providers	****Violent crime rate	Juvenile incarceration rate
<b>Cluster 1</b>	4,027	-1.73	21.60	22.23	19.33	2,273:1	123	M: 0.02 F: 0.00
<b>Cluster 2</b>	11,179	-2.78	25.18	18.78	19.75	4,519:1	265	M: 0.22 F: 0.09
<b>Cluster 3</b>	377,344	+4.57	27.13	11.80	16.00	711:1	405	M: 0.29 F: 0.05
<b>Statewide</b>	27,688	+2.10	24.60	15.00	17.00	580:1	239	M: 0.35 F: 0.01

\*Population change observes years 2010 through 2017.

\*\*Displayed numbers are all based on the mean percentages for the counties within that cluster (County Health, 2014a).

\*\*\*Ratio of population to mental health providers (County Health, 2014b).

\*\*\*\*Based on Uniform Crime Reports data (2012-2014); crime rate is per 100,000 people.

### Interviewing girls and women

Deliberations specific to Kansas counties were used as an initial guide for selecting young women to be interviewed at the Topeka Correctional Facility, facilitating the selection of young women (30 and under) who had spent considerable time in those communities. Once a list of identified women was provided by the facility, I consulted again with Dr. Johannes to further gain insight into each of the communities prior to conducting interviews. A total of eight adults and 12 youth interviewed in the two correctional facilities. In total, 16 of 20 interviewed girls and women came from non-metro counties while four came from metro counties. Additionally,

15 participants came from medically underserved areas, three came from medically underserved and low-income areas, and only two came from counties that are not medically underserved or low income.

I initiated prison interviews at TCF with pre-selected participants based on age and sentencing county. Following adult inmate interviews, all assenting girls at the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex (KJCC) were interviewed individually, in a closed setting, after securing the Superintendent's consent. All semi-structured interviews were between one to two and one-half hours.

The interview schedule was constructed based on a previously created measure of CSEs by Popkin et al. (2015). In addition, as field research for incarcerated girls and women is relatively uncharted, certain open-ended questions were designed to allow exploration into issues that may come up organically. Qualitative methods primarily rely on discovery rather than verification (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995), a well-suited approach when engaging in exploratory work or when working with highly complex or rarely studied subjects (Charmaz, 2006; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The interview schedule consists of direct questions as well as a list of probes to elicit further relevant information. Relying on retrospective recall, the interview schedule explored past experiences in their home communities, reflections on the process that brought them to the facility, and their general perspective on community life.

Interviews were audio-recorded using a laptop computer and a handheld recording device as to avoid reliance solely on memory (DeVault, 1990). Most interviews lasted one to two hours, while a few stretched the span of two and one-half hours. All inmate audios were then transcribed verbatim and saved as a text file. Although interviews were transcribed verbatim, the participants' words were also interpreted (DeVault, 1990; Tilley, 1998) through field notes taken

during interviews as well as observations while walking freely throughout the facilities. Although parts of speech such as pauses were not included within the transcription process, outward displays of emotion (e.g. crying) were recorded within field notes (DeVault, 1990; Ross, 2017).

Qualitative interviewing techniques reach beyond simple conversation and requires the art of hearing (Rubin & Rubin, 2005a). DeVault (1990) addressed what she referred to as translation—various ways in which women’s choice of wording is only “close enough” to their actual experiences. In other words, interviewing goes beyond question-and-answer format, requiring an astute sensitivity to the situation, circumstances, and position of the interviewee. As feminist scholars have asserted, the interviewer stands as translator in many facets. DeVault (1990) described the process of translation as follows, “Often, I believe, this halting, hesitant, tentative talk signals the realm of not-quite articulated experience, where standard vocabulary is inadequate, and where a respondent tries to speak from experience and finds language wanting” (p. 103). As part of the process, I then draw on my own experiences—as woman/mother/teacher, also trained and experienced in psychological clinical work—at “filling in” what was not incompletely articulated, based on verbal and nonverbal cues (Frye, 1983; DeVault, 1990). I inserted various prompts and side notes into the interview schedule regarding concepts I was seeking to uncover. Finally, I structured time for field notes between interviews, recording my observations and thoughts immediately following the interviews, a time-worn technique common among top qualitative researchers (Ross, 2017).

### **Interviewing community actors**

Feminist criminology typically focuses on experiences of those most impacted. In this case, stories and contributions from incarcerated girls and women provide the foundation of this



research. Yet, to understand community-level characteristics more thoroughly and appreciate their shared stories, community actors were included within the interviewing process.

Professionals working within the trenches of Kansas provide their own experiences and perception of small-town community culture.

To begin interviewing community actors, solicitation was sent from the Director of Juvenile Services with the Kansas Department of Corrections (Megan Milner) as well as the Court Services Specialist with the Office of Judicial Administration (Chris Mechler). Both individuals sent an introductory e-mail to all juvenile probation officers as well as court services officers within the ten selected counties. Additionally, an email was sent to all K-State Extension Agents working within the ten selected counties. A snowballing strategy was then used to recruit remaining participants. **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** refers to the final breakdown of professional affiliation of community actors; the largest category is represented by those serving in community corrections.

**Table 3.4 Community Actors and Professional Affiliation**

<b>Professional position</b>	<b>Number completed</b>
Defense Attorney	3
Community Corrections	10
Treatment Providers	4
Law Enforcement	2
Church Minister	1
Court Services	7
County Attorney	2
Extension Agents	6
School Personnel	9
Judge	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>

Snowballing allowed for interviewees to provide contact information for other reliable community workers. With the added knowledge of better understanding the interview schedule, community actors were able to think of others in their community who would share honest feedback about the questions. All referrals were contacted either by e-mail, phone, or both. After

completing 50 community interviews, saturation was reached. All scheduled interviews were completed but no additional appointments were made at this point.

In interviewing stakeholders from the three community clusters, I relied on their perceptions and reports, which served as triangulation between the primary participants (girls and young women) and that of their community (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995). Cross-checking helps to provide validity to participants' responses (Douglas, 1976), although the intent was to understand perceptions.

I conducted all 50 community interviews by phone. Interviews lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to one and one-half hours. I recorded them using a flash drive inserted into a USB port on the phone and took extensive notes. After completing each interview, I then spent time summarizing the conversations as well as my impression of the interviewee's openness. Field notes were recorded and later utilized when analyzing content of interviews within counties. As support, Marshall and Rossman (2008) suggest that the use of several cases, various informants, and more than one source of data collection provides validity and generalizability to qualitative studies.

### **Data management and analysis**

As this current study was primarily focused on the qualitative nature of interviewing girls and women, those interviews within facilities were audio recorded on a handheld device and then saved and secured as .mp3 and .wav files on a password protected computer; all techniques were approved by the University IRB. Second, all .mp3 and .wav files from inmate interviews were then transcribed. A representative selection of community actors' interviews were transcribed (n=30), providing a baseline of intra-community information; the remaining interviews were printed and coded line-by-line, based on common concepts. All field notes and observations

were included for organization, categorization, and coding of imported data. Field notes were included into text files and subjected to open coding, or open inquiry (Ross, 2017).

With specific reference to software such as Nvivo, Welsh (2002) discussed three main approaches to analysis of qualitative data. Options include looking for exact language within the data set, interpretation of meaning, and utilizing the reflexive approach, all of which assists the researcher in incorporating their own contribution to the data creation and analysis process (Welsh, 2002). Such strategies follow Glaser and Laudel's (2013) suggestion of linking empirical information to categories. They also recommend indexing themes and content, followed by extraction; some suggest combining the three options (Mason, 1996).

Sensitivity to detail constitutes a main tenet of qualitative work (Gillespie & Sinclair, 2000), as well as attention to abstract relationships in what is said and observed (Chenail, 2012). As with many forms of qualitative research, a great deal of time is expended in linking data to theory, as guided by conceptual models (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995). Extraction entails identifying suggested fits within codes based on responses of participants while retaining original words (Glaser & Laudel, 2013). Although programs such as Nvivo may assist in locating key terms and themes, individuals may use different language to express the same, or similar, meanings (Welsh, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005b), rendering the researcher's role critical in the analytical process. This researcher's coding process followed these guidelines offered by established literature.

The analyzed interviews were first open coded, examining data for themes that were consistent or diverted from the conceptual model. A total of 58 themes were identified from this process. The 58 themes were then assessed for fit within the 20 concepts within the conceptual model. From the 20 concepts, the interviews yielded 7,463 coded quotes and comments and four

main findings. These categories were then reapplied to the data set to assess for frequency, intensity, and consistency among interviewees. The software was intended to serve as a “filing cabinet” and means for performing basic analysis (Smith & Hesse-Biber, 1996). This procedure contrasts to a sole reliance on the use of qualitative software in which the researcher may be guided too far in one direction (Seidel, 1991), a pitfall that may distance the researcher from their data (Barry, 1998). Having a solid theoretical understanding prior to analyzing and interpreting data is necessary to avoid less-than-credible findings (Fielding, 2000). I took the recommended steps to assure facilitation and accuracy of the data analysis process (Richards & Richards, 1994; Morrison & Moir, 1998).

In line with previous scholarship by feminist criminologists, I recognized the importance of emotional involvement of the researcher and the vulnerable population (Becker 1971). This approach contrasts sharply with quantitative methods and even earlier conventions for conducting interviews as a form of methodology. Feminist methods dismiss ethical concerns with incorporating personal emotion into the interview (Westmarland, 2011), choosing, instead, to state biases, remain sensitive to intrinsic meanings, and overtly make the entire research process transparent. In turn, I paid close attention to content and structure of speech for clues of emotion and meaning (Paget, 1983). These emotional responses were notated within field notes as to preserve unspoken words and provide further context to transcribed interviews. Others before me have noted the value of including researchers’ perspectives on important dimensions (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995), and that “the strength of quality research derives from how close researchers get to their data, rather than the extent to which they are able to maintain detachment” (1995, p. 887). With that said, I also acknowledged and guarded for any tendency to become too involved in such personal discussions.

As a check on involvement in the research process, ongoing consent was a principal component throughout the interview process (Germain, 1986; Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995). As the researcher serves as an “expert” in generating observation data (Xu & Storr, 2012), I reminded all participants of the voluntary nature of their involvement and their ability to opt out of answering specific questions. As such, I exerted energy towards striking a balance in the researcher-participant role, remaining friendly while reminding them periodically of their ability to opt out, and/or to seek mental health services if any distress was experienced due to our discussions.

Confidentiality remains the bedrock of qualitative research. To ensure confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms and numbers are used at every phase in collection, analysis, and reporting processes (Patton, 2001). Where confidentiality is a question, details are changed or redacted to protect the source.

### **Discussion**

Many feminist scholars conduct very well-qualified quantitative research; no specific method is exempted from feminist research. As a group, feminist criminologists fully support and widely utilize qualitative research for understanding social processes. In the current study, the primary research question addresses whether coercive sexual environments exist within non-urban communities; this represents a question that can be answered only through the perspective of girls and young women, a population that remains understudied and misunderstood (Jewkes, 2013). The methodology detailed in this chapter describes a qualitative prison study conducted with girls from the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Facility and women from the Topeka Correctional Facility to measure those perspectives; it is augmented through research within local communities and relevant stakeholders. The second research question addresses influence

of coercive sexual environments on girls' *deep* (incarceration) involvement with the juvenile justice system, while the third seeks to uncover specific pathways from CSEs into the justice system; again, individual-level and community data collection explores such relationships. The final research question assesses community resources and practices, and whether perceptions differ between justice-involved girls and women and that of community stakeholders.

As inspired by feminist scholarship, results of the current study will serve as a catalyst for conversation with state officials; my ultimate goal is to stand as an activist for all young women who find themselves in this precarious situation. It is not enough to know that girls and women are marginalized and punished for their victimization; we must also serve as their public voice, a major mission of feminist research. Specifically, results of the study will generate a conversation with local court and corrections officials to educate them on what is known about female offenders and gendered pathways to offending. An important piece to policy change is to not approach gender-specific criminal justice issues with a one-size-fits-all approach (Arditti, 2012), or even for gender-responsive programs, which often miss the point of over-incarceration. Many times, such policy changes further depress those already oppressed—women of color, women of lower income, and women as a group (Williams, 2015; McCorkel, 2013). Findings of this study will produce unique data to state legislature and community actors, identifying and targeting coercive sexual environments and ways to combat trauma and reduce harm toward girls. This concerted, intentional effort will hopefully result in more girls receiving community-based interventions and treatment, with an aim to eliminate prisons for girls.

## Chapter 4 - Stories behind prison walls

*I could not help but think about my own ability to leave at the end of the day while the girls and women returned to their units. I also continue to think about my disgust of leaving one facility with a live cockroach on my backpack—but not, at least initially, the one that crawled on someone's dinner. —Field notes, December 21, 2017*

### Author's preface

*Reflexivity remains a central concept to feminist methodology; to begin the chapter on prison stories, it seems appropriate to start with one of my own, from my field notes. The above excerpt describes my initial reaction after leaving the juvenile facility. I would entitle the story "Cockroaches," (plural), not singular. After leaving the juvenile prison the first evening, a cockroach ran off my backpack and into my vehicle. I convinced myself that it was only a beetle, continuing my three-hour journey home. During my next visit, it became apparent that my encounter with a lone cockroach was all but a singular incident. As if enough dignities had not yet been stripped, the facility required that all girls eat meals on their unit, trays placed on their laps, while sitting in weighted-down chairs; dinner is served at 4:30 p.m.*

*Let that sink in. Someone's child eats all meals at a solitary chair, plate in lap, stripped of the basic amenity of an eating table. I asked about it. The girls had been told it was more "convenient" than moving them to the "chow hall" where most of the juveniles (i.e., boys) eat. Administration feared that boys' aggressive behaviors would put the girls in danger. On this given evening, one young girl started to scream that a "fucking cockroach" was on her tray. An officer looked at the unwelcomed critter, then located an extra meal for the inmate, which she promptly ate. Several staff later verified the cockroach problem. For me, an "outsider," the presence of a live cockroach on someone's food was not as disturbing as the desensitized responses from the girls and staff. Other than the moment of cursing, it was business as usual.*

*The unpleasanties didn't end there. As a previous employee of this facility, I recall several occasions where staff could leave early, or take vacation, because of the stench of a backed-up sewer. The recollections returned as I encountered the same familiar smell during interviews. The employee exemption is applicable only if one is a "professional" staff member, not inmate #10489. Inmate #10489 was locked behind two rows of sharp barbed wire fence, one metal detector, six secured doors, three additional unsecured doors, and a few dozen officers. Staff put on a good front. Inmates are dangerous. I laugh uncomfortably as I think of "dangerous" girls, including the one just locked up for cutting off an ankle monitoring device.*

*For someone who has never been to a women's prison, some fictional television shows do a decent job of depicting prison life. For example, *Orange is the New Black*, although extreme at times, fairly accurately portrays daily struggles associated with women's prisons. The women live in extremely small quarters, with bunked beds and one small desk. Visitors walk freely with the inmates, but one never feels truly **among** them. You are an uneasy spectator. A constant flow of foot traffic and constant buzz of women coming and going—from work to chow hall, groups, showers—produces an echoing clatter. A tinge of cold and dingy, much like an old-cellar smell, permeates. Although many inmates take pride in maintaining their environment, cleanly upkeep is almost impossible. I tried to imagine what it would be like to never leave.*

#### **Chapter 4 framework**

As Chapter 4 begins, the above field observations attempt to interject the sense of controlled chaos, of both desperation and hope, of isolation in the midst of 900 women pressed together, that constitutes the environment in which the study took place. Working within the conceptual model (see Figure 1.1), Chapter 4 focuses on gendered experiences of girls and women and their adaptations to situations before and after incarceration. Participants reveal



elements of their community's gender regime, based on their own perceptions—a critical part of this research. Later, Chapter 5 addresses community-level characteristics exposed through interviews with local stakeholders.

Stories of the girls and women guide the analysis of this chapter as organized into four main themes: *Frontier communities: Where everyone knows your name (and gender)* covers local culture in non-metropolitan areas, demonstrating ways in which family name and status couples with local gender norms. Second, *Non-metro gender regimes: Here is your [gender] identity* illustrates how multiple institutions present a veneer of contemporary gender norms while responding differently to behaviors of boys and girls. Third, *Place, space, and [the gendering of] coercive sexual environments* addresses the local gender regime specific to factors that create, maintain, and support coercive sexual environments. Fourth, *Dirt roads: Girls' pathway to prison* draws connections among the three themes, explicating how the victimization-to-imprisonment pipeline works for rural girls and women. Lastly, Chapter 4 ends with a discussion section, summarizing findings as incorporated within a gendered pathways model.

Before delving into themes, this chapter briefly reviews the socio-political milieu of the state, providing some context for the state environment in which the study takes place. The chapter then includes sample demographics of participants in this study and describes the coding schema used to determine themes. The crux of the chapter centers on stories and perspectives of the participants, in their words and from their prison cells.

### **Brief review of Kansas milieu**

Kansas has been labeled one of the most socially conservative states in the nation. Historian Thomas Frank wrote the book, *What's the Matter with Kansas* (2004), which reflects the prominence of a cultural war at the expense of dangerous economic policy choices. The book

came out around the time that a 2005 Kansas constitutional amendment banned same-sex marriage; one year later, legislation marked the minimum age for marriage at fifteen. Historically, Kansas was at the center of the 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, banning racially segregated schools throughout the U.S. Kansas remains heavily white (87%), with six percent Black and seven percent constituted by other or non-specified racial identity.

More recently, Governor Sam Brownback (taking office in 2011) initiated what he referred to as a “red-state experiment.” The intent was to bring economic growth by dramatically cutting income tax rates. These cuts caused Kansas revenues to fall by hundreds of millions of dollars with deep budget cuts in areas such as education. Following Brownback’s reelection, the White House announced that Brownback would be nominated as the new U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. Prior to leaving for his new appointment, then Governor Brownback and his wife were announced over the loud-speaker at a basketball game between two Kansas rivals. The crowd’s response made local news; they booed him, both teams (Lennington, 2015). The resulting Brownback financial fiasco will take many more years of recovery efforts, made more difficult with a growth rate of .8 percent, which is among the lowest in the U.S. (Abouhalkah, 2015). As of 2018, Kansas remains heavily conservative, in financial crisis, with deep cuts in most services across the state; local programs have also sharply declined. The Kansas Department of Corrections has closed six facilities and remains critically underfunded and understaffed; as only the most visible outcome, prisoner riots and fires have resulted, forcing the state to declare an emergency in prison staffing (Shorman, 2017).

### **Sample demographics**

The sampling selection included all juvenile girls due to a dwindling number of incarcerated girls in the state (typically 15 or less). For adult women, the technique was purposive, including only

those women 30 years of age and younger, and primarily those whose hometown offense location was in a frontier or rural county in Kansas. **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** exhibits racial composition of the sample, with 80% reporting as white, which is consistent with Kansas population. Girls and women tend to enter the juvenile justice system and criminal justice system after a stent of failed community interventions (Puzzanchera, 2014). Referring to **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**, one can see the spread of prior juvenile placements for both girls and women in this study. For girls, the total number of previous juvenile placements ranged from zero to 18; mean 6.5. For women, the range varied from zero to 29, mean 4.6. Many experienced years of shuffling from one placement to another. The current study also considers the overall number of days incarcerated. On average, juvenile girls (average age 15) had spent almost one year (307 days) of their lives incarcerated. Among adults, most had spent, on average, two years in prison (688 days), though the top end goes up to 5.5 years.

**Table 4.1 Demographic Information of Inmates**

	n(mean)	(s.d.)
<b>Age</b>		
Juveniles (range 14-17)	15.75	.82
Adults (range 21-30)	24.87	2.97
<b>Race</b>		
White		
Juveniles	8	.80
Adults	8	1
Black		
Juveniles	2	.20
Adults	0	0
Hispanic		
Juveniles	2	.20
Adults	0	0
<b>Total number of juvenile placements</b>		
Juveniles (range 0-18)	6.5	6.14
Adults (range 0-29)	4.62	9.35
<b>Total number of prior incarcerations</b>		
Juveniles at KJCC (range 0 to 4)	1.75	1.01
Adults at TCF (range 0 to 0)	0	0
<b>Total time served (in days)</b>		
Juveniles (range 24 to 605)	307.00	202.79
Adults (range 62 to 2005)	688.12	760.66

Table 4.2, provides a guidepost for participant identification when referencing quotes and other salient data sources. For several incarcerated girls, their charges are labeled as violent offenses. However, the details and circumstances surrounding their offenses were diverse—many girls were left in their communities until running away or being truant, at which point they were subsequently incarcerated. Most women were incarcerated for non-violent offenses such as burglaries or drug offenses. The two “violent” offenders included a women who killed her husband in self-defense and a second who gave birth to a baby leaving it unattended leading to death.

**Table 4.2 Reference Guide: Basic Characteristics of Incarcerated Participants**

<b>Project ID #</b>	<b>Facility</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sentence (in months)</b>	<b>Offense (most serious)</b>	<b>Time Served (in days)</b>
1	TCF	Emerson Katson	W	26	11	Burglary	240
2	TCF	Mary Leahman	W	24	23	Contraband	360
3	TCF	Shirley Harper	W	21	13	Burglary	395
4	TCF	Kaydence Brown	W	29	120	2 <sup>nd</sup> Degree Murder	1975
5	TCF	Angie Brittle	W	30	178	2 <sup>nd</sup> Degree Murder	2005
6	TCF	Madelyn Murry	W	23	20	Criminal Damage	62
7	TCF	Adrienne Sharkey	W	23	5	LEO Interference	93
8	TCF	Kynlee Bryant	W	23	12	Distribution/ Possession	375
50	KJCC	Nora Smith	W	16	36	Agg. Indecent Liberties	24
*51	KJCC	Sarah Nelson	H	17	188	2 <sup>nd</sup> Degree Murder	546
52	KJCC	Carrie Johnston	B	15	18	Agg. Battery	605
53	KJCC	Christine Karst	W	15	30	Battery	456
54	KJCC	Joleen Meis	W	16	16	Burglary	102
55	KJCC	Harper Barry	W	14	112	Rape	350
56	KJCC	Tristan Graham	W	16	6	LEO Interference	135
57	KJCC	Kristy Dolechek	W	15	12	LEO Interference	70
58	KJCC	Jamie Nixon	H	16	36	Assault	547
59	KJCC	Maggie Crown	W	16	6	Battery	364
60	KJCC	Nikki Wallace	B	16	36	Commercial Sexual Exploit.	395
*61	KJCC	Carson Burnett	W	17	4	Attempt Escape from Custody	90

\*Youthful Offenders: Youth housed at the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex until one day prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthdays.

### **Coding and themes**

Transcribed inmate conversations constituted 845 pages, a daunting number waiting for analysis. To proceed, I reviewed audio recordings and randomly selected five for a close read of the transcripts; this strategy enabled me to test for categories based on the conceptual model. Through open coding, 58 themes emerged within coded quotes and comments, initially grouped into seven (conceptual map-driven) categories, which deductively morphed into 20 concepts. NVivo was then used to reassess the entire data set for frequency, intensity, and consistency.

**Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** displays the coded themes and frequencies within inmate interviews. While a deductive approach was used to categorize the 58 themes according to the conceptual model, an analytically inductive approach remains sensitive to potential unknown issues that emerge throughout the interviews. The table demonstrates the significant references made to the local gender regime, including comments about local gender norms and policing of girls across different institutions. Addressing the entire conceptual model, participants shared experiences related to their local community infrastructure and gendered experiences. When speaking to gendered violence and sexualized norms, participants disclosed means of addressing their trauma—including local interventions and the handling within the justice system.

**Table 4.3 Theme References with Inmate Interviews**

	<b>References</b>
<b>Community Infrastructure</b>	<b>1, 056</b>
Opportunity structure	174
Collective efficacy	655
Ruling apparatus	143
Organizations	84
<b>Gender Regime</b>	<b>3,302</b>
Institutions	1,605
Hegemonic masculinity	728
Culture	969
Media	0
<b>Coercive Sexual Environment</b>	<b>672</b>
Gendered violence	186
Sexualized norms	242
Gendered social control	244
<b>Gendered Experiences</b>	<b>817</b>
Doing gender	219
Agency	305
Consciousness	45
Efficacy	18
Poly-victimization	230
<b>Adaptations</b>	<b>1,066</b>
Drugs and alcohol use	456
Sexual deviance	46
Accomplice behavior	55
Self-harm	242
Status offenses	267
<b>Local Interventions</b>	<b>550</b>
<b>Criminal Justice System</b>	<b>151</b>

The remainder of Chapter 4 outlines the four main themes as briefly described within the Chapter 4 framework. We begin by understanding density of informal ties in non-urban communities, as evidenced through stature and importance afforded to family name.

#### **Frontier communities: Where everyone knows your name (and gender)**

Life-course and place-level studies have failed in including girls and women in non-urban areas. This section focuses on local culture in non-metropolitan areas specific to lives of girls and young women. Whereas most place-level research focuses on “hard” structural characteristics such as concentrations of disadvantage and low collective efficacy, the current study calls into

question application of the same standards for rural communities. It is well established that non-urban communities produce relatively unique cultural identifiers, such as a denser network of informal ties, but much less is known about how those characteristics are gendered and ways in which such elements affect political and social processes. This section addresses ways in which these factors contribute to a coercive environment for girls and young women. We begin with significance of family name in rural communities, as expressed by incarcerated young women from non-metro areas.

In fact, *all* 20 participants indicated that when youth are implicated in delinquent or criminal acts, one's last name has a significant impact on intervention, which may be initiated (or not) by a concerned neighbor, school official, or law enforcement. In this example, Mary is a 24-year-old who spent her teenage years moving from one foster home to the next. Mary came from a troubled home. She talked about the judge's comments of placing her in a variety of foster homes "in the middle of nowhere," reportedly as a means to protect her from local "bad" connections. The court's rationale was that girls like Mary would be less likely to run if they did not know where they were or who surrounded them; in essence, they "disappeared" Mary. Mary was placed in 29 foster homes over the course of several years. The frontier county, where she spent most of her teenage years, had many labels for her, but the primary one was "outsider":

*Foster kids are considered outsiders and unless your foster parents truly just adore you, you are [always] deemed an outsider.*

Being labeled as a delinquent "outsider" carries a significant rippling effect for many. Nearly all participants described their frontier community as, "*It's a very close-knit community. Outsiders are frowned upon.*" The close-knit description was used by girls and women who were "home grown" in frontier and rural counties as well as those who relocated there.



As one example, Adrienne (23) spent her entire childhood in a southeast rural Kansas community. After she was convicted on drug-related charges (resulting in probation through community corrections), most of her family moved across the U.S. Adrienne later returned to the community with a boyfriend and was almost immediately incarcerated for interfering with law enforcement. She was charged with harboring her boyfriend while police conducted a drug raid. Adrienne believes that many small-town Kansas communities are a legal trap for outsiders: *“I’ve noticed the majority of the people, like even when they do come from the outside in, they get in trouble here in the Midwest.”*

Frontier communities pride themselves on knowing one another. Outsiders are held at a distance, and newcomers must work diligently to assimilate. Acceptance comes more quickly if the newcomer holds a perceived desirable trait (e.g., SES, race/ethnicity, athletic ability). On the other hand, “insiders” who have been established for many generations in the community often get a pass, even with criminal activity.

The rural gaze was noted by these participants. All perceived themselves as outsiders, which comes with a sense of heightened watchfulness. The juvenile girls reported that the general policing strategy was to assess for behaviors deviating from gendered norms for proper girls. Kynlee (23) was a local troubled youth from Southeast Kansas. She spent her free-time drinking and engaging in petty offenses. After dropping out of school, she moved between two rural Kansas communities and noticed that regardless of county, her reputation as a druggie and petty criminal lead to increased community supervision:

*And probably, I was, I was an outsider in those towns, too. That I, when I was doing something wrong, it was kinda, like spotlighted, because they were watching me anyways.*

Girls do not need a criminal record to increase the community's watchful eye. Shirley (21), a lower-functioning woman from a frontier county in Northwest Kansas, was incarcerated on a burglary charge. Coming from an impoverished and dysfunctional family, her biological mom and step-dad engaged in illegal drugs. After her mother passed and her step-father was incarcerated, she was separated from her siblings and shuffled into foster care. Despite having no criminal involvement, the family reputation followed her, increasing her hyper-visibility: *“So, when it's a close-knit community and you're an outsider, you're kind of, like, way over here on everybody's radar.”*

According to participants, the term “outsider” is used loosely within frontier counties. Outsider can imply someone without family origins, while in other cases, it may mean the loss of a previously ascribed community status. Whatever the origin, labeled as delinquent, shuffled from one foster home to the next, called an outsider—all play into the cultural infrastructure of many small communities, inviting negative perceptions and exclusion. The significance hangs strongly on last-name designation. A child attached to a well-respected longstanding family name is much less likely to be targeted as delinquent. Respondents in this study consistently reported that their communities are much quicker to slap the label on those who do not come from a well-established position:

*Um, my ex actually had a daughter who was in school and she is an extremely talented individual. Just gorgeous and smart and just an incredible person. It didn't matter how hard she tried or what she did, she wasn't going to be accepted simply because of her last name. I noticed how when you don't have a certain last name or certain in with one of the higher ups, then you're just, you're nobody.*

According to these interviews, statuses such as outsider, delinquent, and nobody are assigned almost exclusively to individuals lacking a strongly established family name.

For Joleen Meis (16), “Meis” was not a prestigious community name within her Southeastern Kansas county. Joleen shared one of the most disturbing and heart-breaking stories of all participants; her story unfolds throughout Chapter 4. Jolene has experienced nearly all forms of oppression, abuse, neglect, assault, and failure from various institutions, primarily because “Meis” was associated with junkies and prostitution. She knew this from an early age, always yearning to step outside the label:

*That deep down, all I really wanted to be was this girl who people could look at and be proud of. And not someone that was a trouble maker or a kid with all these labels that isn't the real her.*

Labels are significant everywhere, but in frontier counties the impact may be even more intense, given the density of ties and few alternatives. Joleen knew as a child that her mother’s reputation would become her reputation. Without any wrongdoing of her own, it seems that the community had an already-designated path for her. This “paved path” theme was reported as prevalent among all interviewed girls and women; the significance of surname was too powerful to overcome, with few exceptions.

Madelyn (23) also lacked a strong family name, and here we begin to observe gender dynamics attached to status. She referred to her father as an abandoning alcoholic and her mother as too busy with boyfriends. Madelyn described herself as a “burnout.” Within her central rural county, girls labeled as burnouts engage in drug use, sexual promiscuity, and an overall disregard for conventional norms including “acting like a girl.” In her rural community, girls were to attend school, participate in athletics, and demonstrate proper etiquette. Madelyn’s failure to conform agitated all areas of her life. For example, Madelyn described a moment in court:

*I tried to take some of my charges to trial, but my attorney’s like, “There’s no sense in trying to go against the police here because nobody on that jury is going to side with you. They’re gonna side with the police.”*

Madelyn reported that she always felt that her name cemented her identity as a “bad girl,” and by having such a name, she would never possess a position of value or believability.

First names have been gendered for centuries, but in these revealing stories even last names took on a gendered connotation. Girls and women like Madelyn—gender non-conforming and with an unfavorable family name—are set up to fail in rural communities. Close-knit communities protect “valuable” community members. Everyone else sits at an unfair disadvantage.

While gender non-conforming behavior is socially policed everywhere in frontier and rural communities, gender norm expectations vary for well-established “good” families. One interviewee made continual references to the role of one’s last name and how *men* with well-regarded last names hold the power and privilege. Wives (she audibly emphasized the term, with all its implications), she explained, had certain community expectations for how they were to conduct themselves:

*I would say it’s kind of, it is men, but if you’re the wife, then you’re definitely a big figure too, but not as prominent as the husband. So, your husband has a big name, you have to, you know, be the perfect wife. You have to be part of the community and be active and help out with the schools and whatever else there is going on.*

According to this perspective, women are given access to power only through their husband’s position within the community. Although the same argument could be made for urban areas, the tendency toward concentrated male power in rural areas, coupled with lack of positive role models for women, takes on even greater significance.

Gender as a construct continually crept into the interview responses. A series of questions about power dynamics uncovered perceptions of differences between girls and boys, women and men. Respondents revealed, in various ways, a view that both sexes share the same geographic

location but different spaces for opportunity. Most participants were unable to think of a woman in power in their community and only one (five percent of the sample) could identify such a woman. When asked directly about women serving in a leadership role within Western Kansas frontier communities, Emerson (26) shared that her town had:

*...a board of figuring out things, kind of like a community council sort of feeling, maybe. I think that the majority is men, but I know that there are a few women, I think, that I would say, eight out of ten are men.*

Emerson's story was packed with instances of running away and subsequent addiction. She felt neglected by her family and looked to fill the void on the streets. Although she knew her community would judge her incarceration, as well as the delivery of her second child while imprisoned, she remained hopeful in starting a new life once released. Interestingly, most young people tend to go back to their community of origin.

To gauge a generalized version of community life, participants were asked how their community would respond to a hypothetical girl who was often on the streets past curfew, possibly using drugs, engaging in sex, and adopting other harmful behavior such as self-cutting. Many said that no one would help this girl or even try to intervene. One young woman (16) replied that the hypothetical girl would be ignored and viewed as a "menace to society;" these are the words the county prosecutor used during the court hearing to describe her.

Stories about community were overwhelmingly negative. Zero participants came from a well-established family name. Zero individuals felt that they were treated fairly within their close-knit communities. Zero girls and women were given an equal stake within their small towns. The incarcerated girls and women came from oppressed backgrounds with family names labeled as delinquent or criminal. Their own behaviors were perceived as too masculine, or at least not feminine enough; they all felt like outsiders in their hometowns. They were heavily

surveilled as foster care children, placed within environments “for their own good,” supposedly with intent to isolate them from their “negative” environment. Close-knit communities certainly hold the ability to promote well-rounded youth; they also can construct a quick path from victimization to criminalization. For young girls, the result is a rotating door within the juvenile justice system, one that often catapults them into the adult system.

**Non-metro gender regimes: Here is your [gender] identity**

*Oh well, she was a woman who liked sex. Clearly there's something wrong with her, she must be dangerous.* –Angie Brittle

The quote from Angie (30), articulated through sarcasm, refers to assigned gender norms and identity of women in her northern rural community; she expressed her own truth in how women and sexuality are viewed in her community. This specific identity—as a dangerous, sex-crazed woman—was used to describe Angie throughout her trial, although she felt it was applicable to all women in Mableton County, a place she referred to as Mayberry from the television show, *The Andy Griffith Show*.

Local rural culture typically supports the ideology that a woman's sexual identity gives her leverage and control; even a woman's position during sex is subject to community analysis and ridicule. Additionally, a woman who is situated as a sexual being is seen as more aggressive; in turn, aggressive women are dominating and dangerous. The contention that women's sexuality is associated with criminality is not supported in scholarly literature; however, the idea is accepted as the local sexualized culture in Mableton. A woman who initiates and enjoys sex is assumed to be dangerous, out of control, and a menace to society. At least, that is the perception expressed by these girls and young women.

Angie's town knew her as the “dominatrix murderer.” Her story is one of a long line of abuse and violence. She disclosed years of physical and emotional abuse, which culminated in

her shooting and killing her abusive husband. Certainly, urban areas are not exempt from such events and characterizations; laws everywhere do not consider the role of extended abuse and violence in domestic violence relationships. However, studies have found that rural culture supports its own unique version of gender norms, one that follows a narrow set of doctrines and that, at best, offers few alternatives (see Carrington & Scott, 2008; Weisheit & Donnermeyer, 2000).

Related, studies have shown that multiple social institutions accommodate and respond differently to behavior of girls and boys, based on general and local gendered norms. Gender customs tend to be more narrowly defined in non-metro areas. Rural gender regimes rely heavily on gender norms to regulate its youth, but not all girls are “equal;” community reputation and status matter. Girls like Mary, for example, who experienced 29 different foster homes, learn that their bodies are of value to local men. Mary, who presents with a non-conformist gender identity, identified herself as a minority (though she is white) in a predominantly white community, with no [good] family name, and a reputation as a “frisky” delinquent. She described expected girls’ behavior and appearance as, “*Dressing appropriately, which is fashionable but not slutty. You have to have proper language, yet you’re kind of feisty. You have to be girly.*” She also pointed out that being girly means that girls are to accept sexualized harassment from white men of status:

*It’s like, out in the public, they’re [rich white men] this way. But you know, then, you run into them in the parking lot and there’s nobody around and all of a sudden, he wants to talk about the way your butt looks in your jeans. You’re just feeling the need to ask, “Hey, how’s your wife, by the way?”*

Gendered social control allows for boys and men to act differently than girls and women. From Mary’s experience, men can make sexualized comments, especially to outsiders. Boys and men are expected to adhere to a prescribed set of characteristics as are girls and women, but

almost all power exists within the assumed male roles. All participants were asked what it would mean to “act like a girl” in their community: The following is a list of quoted “girl” terms:

*Cooking and cleaning; afraid of manual labor; afraid of getting dirty; must wear make-up and do their hair; be respectful; do hygiene; wear perfume; are weak both emotionally and physically; must cross their legs; and no cussing.*

When asked about common characteristics and expectations of boys and men in these communities, common responses included:

*Farming; trucks; boots; four-wheeling; working out; working on cars; muscular; must hold doors open; physical strength; watching sports and acting thuggish.*

Non-metro gender regimes call for strict maintenance of behaviors for girls, all within a set of norms more constrained for girls than boys. Mary was asked what would happen if a girl chose to deviate from her assigned gender identity:

*They're definitely intrigued by her. I was dressed proactively. I had a loud mouth. I would cuss a lot. So, people definitely, you peaked their interest. But at the same time, they like to whisper about you. They like to look at you and you know, they'll look at you, you know, they're talking about you. It's not really a hidden thing, it's, it's almost like being shunned.*

Mary, and other girls and women, recognize that their non-conforming gender roles may be intriguing but certainly not accepting in a small community. There is no acceptable niche into which they can reside.

Non-metropolitan communities exert direct and indirect social control to pressure girls into gender-conforming behavior. When girls fail to adhere to prescribed behaviors, some may describe it as a “phase” since girls know better than to deviate from the “old-fashioned” values: “They kind of felt like maybe she didn’t know her place, or she was just going through a phase in her life. That she’s just trying to find herself.” “Phase” was also used to describe how schools deal with deviation from heterosexual behavior. Girls and women who identified as non-heterosexual feel consistently pressed:



*It was a struggle. Like, the school wasn't okay with it [homosexual orientation] so they probably would've tried to push me in the opposite direction.*

Demonstrated gender and sexual orientation, both in appearance and in behavior, create significant messages for young girls. At times, such pressure can have debilitating results. As one instance, Kaydence (29) reported a history of severe mental health issues, which were unaddressed and ignored for years. She self-medicated with drugs and alcohol, which was more socially acceptable than a trip to the psychiatrist. During what she referred to as a “downward spiral,” she gave birth in her car on the side of the road. She proceeded home, leaving her newborn in the car where he subsequently died. She was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to ten years in prison.

Schools, as an institution, was mentioned 935 times in the 20 interviews. Kaydence was one who talked extensively about her school. Kaydence recognized indirect forms of gendered social control such as being marked down for excessive talking (boys were usually marked for violence or “rough housing”). In most stories, these participants believed that they were unfairly policed within the school system in ways boys were not. Gender deviation is only acceptable as a form of entertainment such as spirit week during Homecoming (e.g., girls dress like boys), a time for fun and games. Overwhelmingly, girls and women perceived their small, close-knit communities as “old fashioned,” or set back in time.

Kaydence described her school as micromanaging the overall perception of gender norms for girls coupled with expected sexual behaviors. She provided the following as an example of how sexuality was policed by the school:

*I mean, they kicked out a girl for being pregnant in high school, so. 'Cause, they pressured her really, really well, to not be there, because it hurt their pride of the school.*

The pride of the school overrode the need to help a pregnant teen; instead, the school treated her as a blight and pressured her to leave. These participants were quick to recognize the double standard:

*Like for them [boys/men] it's definitely, "Oh, boys will be boys." If a boy does something, if a girl, if a boy gets a girl pregnant, "Oh, well he was just being a boy. That was just another conquest." If a girl gets pregnant, "Oh, she's a slut."*

The prevailing culture, according to these interviews, is that pregnant girls create a blight on school pride in rural communities. Pregnant teenage girls are sluts. Pregnant teenage girls are to blame for their own pregnancy: *"These females are like told, you got pregnant in high school, and it's your fault."*

Kaydence had been an outcast in her community, known for severe mood swings, substance abuse issues, and sexual promiscuity—all behaviors that do not align with gendered norms, especially for "good" women in rural communities. At the time of the interview, she had completed about five and one-half years of her ten-year sentence. She stated, yearningly, that she wished someone would have seen her struggles and intervened; no one did. Hyper-visibility in rural areas does not necessarily equate with guidance, support, and services.

Blame is almost always placed upon the girls and women, even in sexual assault situations. Joleen witnessed an underage girl making a report of sexual assault. The response was public disapproval and anger towards the reporting victim:

*What I've noticed, is say, a 19-year-old boy had sex with a 14-year-old girl, and he gets in trouble. They're [his friends] going to be on that girl's head trying to jump her and beat her up.*

Girls learn from an early age not to report sexual assaults. With almost complete certainty, the girl's report will spark negative comments and a threat to social status. When girls do find courage to report, community members work hard to "deal" with the "issue" on their own,

without drawing too much attention. The perception is that only certain girls are worth helping. Other girls—the ones without good community standing—were quickly labeled and pushed even further to the margins. While sexualized culture varies within each space, these young women from frontier and rural counties consistently reported negative instances of dealing with gender identity and surveillance of girls' sexuality. As Angie explained earlier, towns thought to be a fantastical “Mayberry” have a reputation to maintain.

Gender regimes represent a framework for identifying specific gender meanings attached to specific locations (Connell, 1987; Williams, 2002). The local gender regime is a product of local (and universal) media, culture, and even place-specific hegemonic masculinity. While the literature has examined gender regimes, few have studied the local gender regime in rural communities (see Williams & Craig-Moreland, 2005). The current findings suggest that local gender regimes privilege a specific kind of masculinity and femininity, typically very narrow in scope, and deviations from expected gendered behaviors are punished. Punishment varies, depending on one's family status in the community.

Rural communities boast about close-knit communities, as a place that welcomes outsiders, a place where it is “great to raise kids.” Stories from girls and women in this study challenge this presentation. For example, sexual harassment within schools negatively affect girls more than boys (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Bagley, Bolitho, & Bertrand, 1997; Gadin, Hammarstrom, 2005; Chiodo, Wolfe, Crooks, Hughes & Jaffe, 2009). Yet, according to these interviews, tolerance of sexualization of girls runs rampant within school buildings. Some argue that agricultural communities promote less stereotypical expectations of girls' and boys' behaviors; yet we heard nothing of this supposed equality in these interviews. What was expressed, over and over, is that gender matters, and generational names own gendered norms.

That is, well-established families create a certain set of gendered norms through wealth, athletics, or any other perceived positive quality. Police then monitor these behaviors in others. Such a system ensures that frontier and rural communities remain true to their small-town roots, at least by outside appearances.

### **Place, space, and [the gendering of] coercive sexual environments**

Literature on coercive sexual environments, portrayed as emerging in low-income, high poverty-stricken urban areas, suggests that girls and women encounter daily oppressive experiences within that sexualized culture. Popkin et al.'s (2015) model suggests that broader cultural norms around gender-based abuse, combined with elevated levels of chronic violence and poverty and low levels of collective efficacy, is likely to create a coercive sexual environment (CSE), one that significantly increases risk for its girls. The landscape in rural communities may not align with those same characteristics, and this study finds evidence that a sexualized culture may exert a strong presence in non-metro areas, quite separate from economic factors. Local sexualized culture may foster a host of behaviors ranging from sexual name-calling to forcible rape. Though not familiar with the specific term, many participants have a fairly firm grasp on how sexualized environments work within their respective communities. When asked about the handlings of sexual assaults within their communities, responses were consistent. Body language shifted during this part of the interview process. Participants leaned in, voices raised, hands were thrown in the air. The topic struck a chord.

Participants in this study spoke often about sexualized name-calling. For these girls and women, having sex was not a requirement for being deemed promiscuous. Mary talked about a mixed bag when associating with male friends:

*Say, if you were just casual, and got along with the guys really well, all of a sudden, you're a whore. Even if you're not sleeping with these guys, you're just talking their lingo. You're still a whore.*

Girls and women who express any outward signs of sexual interest are negatively labeled. While the same characteristic may be applied to society in general, the difference seems to be in degree. Rural gender regimes carry a heavy expectation that girls and women hide their sexual interests; at the same time, extreme sexualization from boys and men is tolerated or even praised:

*They're probably gonna believe him over her. Especially if she might already have that image, you know what I mean? Like depending, like, you can be, flirtatious I guess, you know what I mean, friendly? And then all of a sudden that converts to easy. People will outwardly see that and say, "Oh well, you know, she giggled and twirled her hair, so she's sleeping with him.*

Much like Mary, who was described as “frisky,” girls and women who are perceived as flirtatious are labeled as “dangerous,” “sluts.” Sexual name-calling appeared in the transcripts as sluts (33 references), ho (14 references), and bitch (28 references). Few respondents could generate responses for boys and men having sex, but some believed they would be congratulated, seen as a little “player” (with a positive connotation). Males act within the “boys will be boys” mentality, almost always accompanied by the tough, strong macho image, and one in which multiple sex partners deserves bragging rights. Adhering to strict local gender norms, girls were not to be even interested in sex, and definitely not permitted to have multiple sex partners.

As an example of interactions in highly sexualized environments, the “Tristan story,” as Tristan herself described it, began with cat-calling from older boys in her new neighborhood. She was known as a “crack baby” with a struggling single mother. The cat-callers eventually became her peer group. Her free-time, at age 13, was spent engaging in drug use and sex with this group of older boys.

Tristan, now 16, described a tradition in school allowing girls to slap other girls, in a sexual way, as entertainment for boys. This “tradition” was referred to as Slap Ass Friday:

*Girls will walk up, and they'll be like, “Booty slap!” and then guys will walk up and be like, “Slap ass Friday!”*

With multiple girls reporting this “tradition,” it became apparent that not everyone was able to engage in this ritual—a “game” played by girls across the spectrum of county size. Girls had to possess certain qualities that likely were physically appealing to boys. Several girls described this ritual, and when asked how teachers addressed the behavior, responses were unanimous.

Teachers were aware of the behavior but rarely did anything to prevent it or enforce sanctions.

At times, girls observed teachers laughing when kids would slap one another:

*I mean, a lot them [teachers] seen it, I guess. I mean there's teachers in Walburg that have fucked students, so.*

Wait. The conversation just turned from a supposed “innocent” tradition of Slap Ass Friday to a mention of rape? Within the milieu of sexualizing girls, even adults seem unable or unwilling to address it openly.

Even everyday practices take on an ominous tone. According to these interviews, schools exercise gendered social control by expecting girls to dress in a manner that does not “distract” boys or entice them into sexualizing behavior:

*“Well, you don't want to distract the boys.” I'm not here to do that-to be something that distracts boys. I'm a person, you know? I think it's completely sexist, and it sexualizes girls into being objects, sexual objects, and I don't think that that's right.*

It is unclear exactly how schools determine which behaviors warrant policing of girls. What is apparent, from experiences of these young women, is that schools target behaviors that are observed from an outside eye—the community beyond. The tradition of Slap Ass Friday is reserved for the school setting. The dress code, however, can be viewed by all community folk

throughout the course of a day and must be closely scrutinized. Appearances matter a lot in rural communities. Schools must appear stern in working with families to make sure that girls are “appropriate girls” and that boys are given a distraction-free environment.

Tristan’s story provides another example of gender disparities within schools. When Tristan was 14, she ran away from home; she called an older male for help. She discussed the conversation they had about her running away and how he was going to “help her” in this process:

*"But do you really wanna be on the run?" I'm like, "Yes, this is stupid." He was like, "Okay, well, you know, I'll help you. I'll connect you with some people who will help. You wanna leave state? What do you want to do?" I said, "No." He was like, "Okay, do you want a fake ID and stuff?" I said, "Hell yeah," you know, like ... But like I started drinking alcohol, you know, and you know, I was like, "Okay, whatever." And, you know, I ended up fucking him. He was like 25, and I was at the age of 14, and so yeah.*

This form of sexualized culture, coupled with the dismissal of male accountability, leaves girls and women extremely vulnerable. This vulnerability further exploits them into a life of status-offending behavior, self-harm, and even criminal conduct. For these young women, it led directly into the criminal justice system.

Schools are not the only source for exploitation of girls. Vulnerabilities are exploited by the victim’s loved ones. In Joleen’s story, her mother introduced her to methamphetamines during her teen years. Joleen talked about her mother selling her [Joleen’s] body to drug dealers to pay off the mother’s drug debt. Her mother would, in turn, inject Tristan with drugs to gain her compliance with men:

*My mom, she would get more secretive. She'd get me really high to where I couldn't comprehend what was goin' on, or I couldn't function. She would just like, whoever wanted to sleep with me, slept with me. She would always tell me, she'd be like, "Hey, this dude wants to have sex with you and he's going to give me this much." And I'm like, "mom, I'm your daughter, you're supposed to*

*protect me. Why are you asking?" This isn't love. I shouldn't have to do this to get my mom's approval.*

The abuse escalated. Joleen's mother required that she watch her (mother) perform sexual acts with men. Joleen was embarrassed to say she "went along" with such acts.

Respondents did not use "sex trafficking" terminology, but rather, sex "trading" when talking about their experiences. Starting at the age of 12, Harper (now 14) engaged in intercourse and oral sex with her brother who was two years older. Her language indicated that she used self-talk to convince herself the behaviors were not as "bad" as in the beginning:

*And it gets easier though. Like, I'd be like, "No," and he would offer me his phone, and I was like, "Yeah." Sometimes, you know, I would be like, "No, I don't want to do that." And then he'll put more stuff into it and I'll be like, "Yeah." You know? I got his phone for three weeks, 'cause that's how long I was grounded.*

Girls within such an environment are conditioned to accept inappropriate sexual gestures, jokes, harassment, and even sexual assault. Harper's experiences with incest became so commonplace that stigma associated with disclosure seemed completely absent. Joleen and Harper are not isolated cases; they represent many young women. One distinction for rural communities is that few services, resources, or alternatives exist for the most vulnerable—the girls, and especially those with outsider status.

While girls such as Joleen and Maggie shared clear stories of exploitation, and at times, sex trafficking, girls like Maggie (16) associated sex with drugs; this heightened sexual environment was her norm. Maggie's youth was packed with sex, drugs, and permissive (or neglectful) parenting. However, drugs are not what landed Maggie into prison for the fourth time; rather, she was charged with Interference with Law Enforcement, which meant she removed her electronic monitoring device.



Maggie's history, even at an early age, is riddled with trouble from adults around her. She talked about associating with an adult man while in the presence of her friend. At one point, she was left alone with him. "*Uh, he, uh, pulled his dick out and started masturbating in front of me.*" When asked how she felt about the incident, she laughed uneasily and said she tried to make light of the situation by telling him to put it (his penis) away. The man continued to masturbate until he climaxed. Maggie recited the story like someone would tell an everyday experience at the grocery store. Maggie, like many girls it seems, had grown to expect unwanted sexual advances and sexual assault from men; omission of sexual assault is enough to label a man as a good person:

*Um, but at the same time, there's also people that are, okay, like, my- my current [drug] dealer he's in his 50s. And he- he was the coolest dude I've ever met in my life. And he's never- he's never disrespected me, ever. And he's never got weird with me. He's like a genuine, like, friend to me I think. Maybe- Maybe deep down he thinks I'm cute but I don't know.*

Maggie, at 16, identified a 50-year-old drug dealer as the "coolest dude" she knew. To support her claim, she pointed out that he had never made any overt attempts to engage with her sexually, adding "as of yet" after the quote above.

Sexualized environments are so common that many girls and women do not report their experiences. Girls like Maggie own the experiences as part of "the life." Like Joleen, many girls do not have language to label their mothers' behavior as sex trafficking. The following examples display only a handful of the dozens of comments made about sexualized culture and norms for reporting sexual assault:

*Someone who doesn't party, drink, or date a lot, or have some sort of reputation, would be more believable. I don't know that they don't necessarily believe her, but they are not willing to do anything about it.*

*If a girl already has that, you know promiscuous history, she'd probably be more likely to keep to herself because she would just be deemed a liar.*

All 20 interviewees relayed at least one story of abuse. Sixteen-year-old Joleen's childhood was one of the most devastating. Aside from her own mother sex trafficking her, she experienced years of physical and emotional abuse. She talked about her mother's past boyfriend locking her and her younger siblings in a bedroom for days:

*I got diagnosed with PTSD because when I was four or five, my mom had a boyfriend and he would um, lock me and my sisters in a room. And he, she wouldn't, he wouldn't let her feed us. And he would tie her to her bed every night and inject her with meth. And she was so fucked up back then. And he'd beat the shit out of her all the time. And one night he set the meth lab on fire with us in it. And his mom got us out. We would have to stay in our room and shit on ourselves and piss on ourselves and mom wasn't allowed to change us.*

Joleen's story was horrific. But, she did not stand alone. Recall Adrienne (23), convicted for lying about her boyfriend's whereabouts, and described multiple abusive dating relationships as a teen and young adult. She believed her "attraction" to abusive men stemmed from her childhood experiences of abuse. Adrienne shared one account:

*I was sexually abused by my mom's ex-fiancé when I was nine until I was 11. Then, the rest was just, I was just physically abused by him and mentally abused. Then just physical and mental, like, with my exes and my kids' father and stuff.*

It is difficult to wrap one's head around the word "just." At some point in their lives, physical and emotional abuse was "just" the minor abuse these young women suffered; they all minimized it and often blamed themselves. Emerson, the one interviewee who recently delivered her second baby while incarcerated, repeatedly minimized her own sexual assault as well as those occurring to her sister and mother:

*My mom was definitely more of a victim than I would say I was. Where she was sleeping in her bed and someone came in and, and, and I think that um...And then I, me and my sister were both partying and out there like, you know, kind of, uhm, more in a dangerous environment.*

The three attacks were separate but shared one significant commonality—they were all sexual assaults. Emerson somehow felt that by drinking and socializing she was asking for “it.” In Emerson’s mind, to be a “real” victim, such as her mother, required being blindsided by a stranger and violently attacked in the dark hours of the night. Most girls and women did not recognize their own distortions in an engrained, culture-supported thought process; girls and women are to blame for their own victimization.

Interestingly, participants were more insightful in recognizing forms of distorted thinking by community members. Some of the interviewees recognized how the community perceived sexual assaults, using common myths such as:

*Oh, well you shouldn't have been dressed like that.*

*Oh, well, you know, you were pretty flirtatious.*

*You know, she was begging for it all night.*

*It came out, like, I had sex with him and um I wanted it and it just came out wrong. So, I eventually – I was like no, no, that's not what happened.*

In the final quote listed above, Nikki (now 16) was only ten years old at the time of her rape, committed by her brother’s 23-year-old friend. At the age of ten, she was blamed for her rape. Even while conversing about the assault, she used language suggesting that she should have used more physical force to stop the “sex.” When asked if ten-year-old girls can consent to sex, her answer was not an immediate “no.” Six years after her own rape, Nikki still assumes some responsibility.

Certainly, Nikki is not the only one with self-blame and misplaced understanding of coercion. Joleen believed she was not sexually assaulted since she was “only” touched and

excused the assault on drugs. Desperate to make sense of their assaults, girls search inward. Often, given no good alternatives, girls accept a life where boys and men are allowed, even expected, to sexualize their being and violate their person:

*Like, a lot of the time, we just brushed it off, like, it was the thing to do. I mean, I think that's just how we were taught.*

To deal with their pain, many participants engaged in forms of self-harm. The most noted forms included cutting or overdosing on prescription medications. A common response from caregivers emerged, one absent of support and help. The following excerpts illustrate:

*My foster parent noticed. She just told me to quit being stupid and to make smarter decisions. And that was that...I think it would've been nice for somebody to legitimately care and not just say okay, I'm a foster parent. I have to handle this situation. –Mary*

*Like the first time that somebody ever knew, was when I was a kid. I showed my dad that I was doing it, because obviously I wanted him to stop me. And he kind of said that I was doing it for attention. It got worse when I was older, and then I started to hide it from people. But I had to go to school and was in a cabinet making class and couldn't wear long sleeves. –Madelyn*

*I would take my sweatshirt off. The counselor would notice, and she'd be like, "Why are you doing this?" Then they would call my parents. My dad would usually whip me for it. –Christine*

All 20 participants discussed (456 references) substance use as a means of self-medication to numb effects of their traumas. Adrienne (23) felt that her drug use and personal pain became a cyclical process, one that helped elevate childhood memories of abuse and domestic violence within her dating relationships:

*Yeah, it's just one big vicious cycle. We use to numb the pain of what's going on [abuse], but what's going on is what's making us use. And it's...just goes around and around and around and around and around...I've been abused a lot in my life. I use drugs to block out the mental pain of it. Whenever you start feeling it again, that's when it's time to go get high again.*

Repeatedly, the participants recognized drugs as a common form of coping, one to numb years of abuse. Girls in rural communities are not given leeway to use drugs or engage in consensual sex, leading to internalized struggle:

*I've never wanted to sit here and be like, "Oh mom, well, you know, I just went and fucked this dude, and I just tried this drug, and you know, I feel really shitty about it, but you know, I want to do more 'cause it- it just makes me feel better.*

*Um, when you feel vulnerable. Um, when you're alone- when you feel alone. Um, when you do not have any affection, like, when nobody is really loving you or you got a whole bunch of hatred in your life or if, um, yeah. You just been through a lot and you just feel like you need somebody, or you need somebody on you.*

Vulnerabilities initially exploit girls and women, then create a cycle of abuse and unhealthy defaults for coping. While most participants shared histories of sexual abuse, many consciously turned to sex either to gain some illusion of control or to fit in. Nikki, the ten-year-old rape victim, shared the second quote above. She recognized her need for affection and gave herself sexually to someone to fulfil her physical and emotional need. Girls desperately seek positive attention. Denied that, sex gives them some form of attention, even if an unhealthy situation.

Coercive sexual environments have been studied only within urban spaces. Up to this point, CSEs are known to thrive in poverty-stricken areas filled with violent crime. As place-level theories predict, studies in urban areas support that when collective efficacy is low and violent crime and poverty high, harmful culture emerges, including overt and sexually charged behaviors towards girls and women. The process works differently in the non-urban communities in the current research. The reported violent crime rates in frontier and rural communities are much lower than that of urban counties. However, for at-risk girls in these communities, these experiences of sexual exploitation are magnified and the violence, a daily occurrence. This study documents that rural communities are not exempt from CSEs. Instead, CSEs may emerge in conditions similar to their urban counterparts (patriarchy) but are maintained through distinct

mechanisms. Although frontier and rural places have lower reported rates of violent crime (and high levels of cohesion), they also support environments that encourage a different form of sexualized violence and culture—one that seems to target at-risk girls for profound forms of abuse. This is not to assume that frontier and rural communities are as violent as urban locations, or at least not in the same way. But such a combination of forces seems to encourage sexual violence against certain populations and ignore the pleas of some girls and women. As places and spaces evolve, so do CSEs.

In all communities, broader sexualized culture allows for the devaluation and abuse of girls and women. In rural communities, however, CSEs appear to emerge when collective efficacy is high. Coupled with a camouflaged but hyper-sexualized culture, characteristics unique to rural areas—such as family status and highly dense generational connections—translates into turning a blind eye to sexual harassment and assault, especially for so-called outsiders.

Experiences of these young women, all deemed outsiders, demonstrate how close-knit communities work hard to maintain a small-town crime-free appearance, while supporting an internal “secret” code of silence—a code much deeper and more secretive than in urban domains. According to interviews in this study, white, middle-class families, specifically boys and men, are allowed to engage in sexual exploitation of girls and women with little to no reprimand. The culture of “boys will be boys” remains especially strong in non-metro places. Rural communities work hard to keep prestigious families in their proper positions and boys with strong family names within star roles at school. It takes a concerted effort to create and maintain a coercive sexual environment in frontier land.

“...*that’s just how we were taught*” resonates as raw truth for girls’ expected compliance with sexualized violence. It is out on these dirt roads, that coercive sexual environments create a pathway to perhaps even greater gendered violence. Abusive behavior continues when boys are taught that sexualized looks, gestures, comments, and even assault are okay, and girls are taught that it includes part of the “female experience.” In rural communities, girls believe they should not report abuse, especially involving a respected man. If they do, they are labeled as burnouts, sluts, and delinquents with no credibility in a community that pushes out the “less desirables.” For a community known for its “Mayberry” qualities, it is far too easy to sit back and let oppression remain hidden. Every person in this small close-knit community is assigned a name and a gender identity. You are either in, or you are out. Being an outsider is no place to be in frontier land.

### **Dirt roads: Girls’ pathway to prison**

Gendered pathways literature establishes a pipeline for girls with a history of victimization into the juvenile justice system, an environment that often fails to address their trauma. Girls and women in rural communities know to keep quiet about their issues. Family names run deep. Girls from privileged families know not to ruin the family name, and those from less well-off backgrounds understand they do not matter. Further, small communities lack resources available in urban domains, and adults either do not recognize or fail to address their needs. Rural girls are outed and pushed further to the margins. The remainder of this section outlines three specific dirt road pathways for girls.

#### **Pathway 1: Family junctures**

As established throughout Chapter 4, family status and name are highly influential within rural communities, with different consequences for girls and boys. While research confirms that

pathways to prison are rooted in histories of abuse and neglect, rural girls hold an additional disadvantage (DeHart & Moran, 2015; Tasca, Zatz, & Rodriguez, 2012). For those lacking a positive family reputation, a juncture is created—one that gives few options and may divert girls from community support to the concrete cell.

All interviewees talked about the role of family. Some may not have articulated influence of reputation, but most recognized that one's family name can change a young girl's life trajectory. In turn, they begin to feel hopeless. They perceive that their community does not care about them and thus, "...changes the way of thinking [to], 'Oh well, nobody cares about me, so why am I going to care about what happens to me?'" (Mary). Such perceptions lead to maladaptive responses.

Young women like Mary, Christine, and others, felt pushed out—from their own parents, from school officials, from community citizens. They expressed hopelessness in achieving a name for themselves, succumbing to the very labels they wished others would overlook. They became alcoholics, drug addicts, cutters, suicidal; they adopted a heap of sexualized names such as hos and sluts. In the absence of positive support, they sank further into the cracks of their community, landing them in the criminal justice realm.

Zero of those 20 interviewed came from a well-established community name. Based on the 20 interviews, it seems the only girls worthy of help are those with positive rural family roots. Of the 12 adolescent girls, four were incarcerated for low-level technical violations. In all cases, they had cut off their electronic monitoring devices and run away at least once. The goal of incarceration is to hold offenders accountable for their actions while keeping the public safe, implying that these young women must have been perceived by the courts as a "threat" to society. With a poor family reputation, the girls were incarcerated to protect them, perhaps, but



primarily to protect the community. Kansas is no safer after incarcerating girls like Joleen, Tristan, and others; these girls are imperiled, not due of their own criminal behavior, but because of their own victimization.

### **Pathway 2: A veneer of idyllic but [un]safe milieux**

Dirt road communities are not known for an abundance of entertainment venues, but they are known as a safe place, open, with homes left unlocked. With low reported violent crime rates, where everyone knows everyone, these “boring” communities may seem safe. And for many, they are. Yet, the young women in this study identified their number one need as a feeling of safety. Whether on dense city streets or country lanes, coercive sexual environments instill a sense of fear, resulting in lack of hope, trust, and safety for girls, especially for outsider at-risk girls such as the participants in this study. Tristan, recall, was a sex-trafficked youth. Just prior to her most recent (fourth) incarceration, she ran away from home and within 24 hours was sold within a child sex trafficking ring. She talked about trauma associated with her recent trafficking: *“I know it's gonna take time, and I'm seeking safety in being here [prison].”* These data do not support a “safe” environment for at-risk girls.

In the stark, stale environment most would find to be intimidating and terrifying (prison), girls like Tristan felt safe, relative to her previous situation. Similarly, Christine (15), spent a great deal of her interview time talking about her abuse and mental health; she had been in group homes, foster care, and inpatient mental health facilities since age ten. She had spent one-third of her life in out-of-home placements, largely within locked facilities. As we talked, she pulled up her sleeve and displayed a recent set of cuts on one of her forearms, as a testament to her internal pain: *“I would have to feel like I'm in a safe environment [but]. . . I'd have to feel like I belonged. I mean, here, I feel safe. I just don't feel like I belong.”* The prison setting produced

some sense of normalcy, or at least predictability, in her life. For girls like Tristan and Christine, prison was better than the neglect and trauma they felt in their own community—a whisper, at least, of safety. In this context, it is easy to rationalize how girls, at age 15 or 16, could be on their fourth incarceration.

Many of these young women also expressed a lack of trust, based on previous betrayals. Adrienne, describing a history of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, admitted to extreme measures to keep her “baby’s daddy” around and happy. She never learned about healthy love. She referred to her tendency to pursue abusive relationships as a “vicious cycle” of abuse—one that had become familiar after most trusted adults in her youth had violated her.

Safety and trust—related words that seem commonplace hold different meanings in different contexts. These young women attempt to rationalize their traumatic pasts as something they are grateful for, as an experience they can now use to their advantage, “*I mean, everything happens for a reason and, I don’t know. It’s made me strong as a person, everything that’s happened. I’d rather be strong than oblivious.*” The last part of Joleen’s statement carries significant meaning. From Joleen’s perspective—as a young girl with a long history of physical, emotional, and repeated sexual abuse, fighting addiction, knowing her own mother had sacrificed her body for financial purposes—surviving a coercive sexual environment provided her a bizarre sense of empowerment, all evidence of a long line of agency in the form of survival. Joleen felt “*mature beyond my years*” (Joleen). In a CSE where all odds are stacked against them, young women attempt to make sense of their chaos and search for strands of hope, accomplishment, and agency.

### **Pathway 3: Backroads, byways, and social capital**

These young women want more. They yearn for more positive support, kinds not offered down backroads and byways of the rural heartland. A seeming lack of awareness or concern, coupled with lack of resources, creates a victimization-to-prison pipeline for frontier girls. Madelyn, who referred to herself as a local burnout, was labeled “ungovernable” by the court, determining that adults were unable to control her behavior. However, a lack of community and programs exacerbates the situation for girls like Madelyn, Joleen, and Maggie, leaving few options outside the family. Rural communities are grossly lacking in quality services available to many urban areas.

All participants were asked about community resources. They seemed hard-pressed to articulate concrete services. But most did talk about unfair gendered dynamics, citing males possessing leadership roles within their communities. What they want to see, they said, is the story of a successful woman. A woman, a role model who could show them how to discover, or bulldoze, their way out of circumstances in which their gender and sexuality is constantly policed, and where abuse is part of daily life. They want hope, and they want someone—anyone really—to show them another way. They want hope.

Gendered social control exists in all places and spaces but non-metropolitan gender regimes are different in some respects than urban spaces. In frontier and rural domains, pathways are paved before girls are born, due to the lack of positive connections within the small communities. Family name heavily directs life trajectories for girls in rural areas. Rural communities are known for their small-town close-knit presentation, but inside truths tell a different story. For the young women in this study, their realities reflect institutional failure, both culturally and structurally. Girls will learn gendered norms of their community. They know to

minimize or ignore sexualized behavior from boys and men. Those on the periphery learn that their bodies are a commodity to be bought and sold. Their value is either in a rich family name or in the demand of their product. Rural communities are isolated from larger urban issues, but sexualized culture is alive and well. For these girls, regardless of paths via family, country customs, or backroad resources, it all ended in a concrete cell.

### **Discussion**

The rural mystique. Rural communities are known for harboring unique qualities. Traditions and values run deep and wide. Change moves slower than in metropolitan communities. Thick ties and generational roots anchor old-fashioned views. These characteristics, while not completely unique to frontier and rural communities, often combine by degree to create hostile environments for girls. To adhere to strict gendered norms. To shut up when in need. Girls from well-known families do not have problems; girls from less-off families are ignored. Some youth in rural communities quickly realize their value to the community—of no value or negatively portrayed. Rural values are stubborn. No-name girls carry the burdened weight of these values. Non-urban CSEs do exist in rural terrain, exerting negative outcomes; daily exposure to rural patriarchy allows for the emergence of rural coercive sexual environments. The remainder of the discussion section outlines three important findings from the stories of incarcerated girls. Specifically, CSEs carve three pathways diverting girls into the juvenile justice system. First, family name may mean being prison bound before birth. Second, girls are not safe in frontier in rural communities. Third, frontier and rural communities lack the incentive and services to help unsafe girls from unworthy families; the result is a lack of social capital for at-risk girls.

Specific to rural communities, last name, family reputation, and generational standing, add to the family status. In communities described as close-knit, this defining characteristic only extends to the worthiest citizens. Upstanding members in rural communities engage in daily operations to maintain their status and preserve the standing of others deemed valuable. This rank comes with privileges for boys and men while encouraging all girls, of any status, to conform to rural patriarchy. Whether frontier or urban, girls are born at a disadvantage to boys, a central tenet of feminist theory. Patriarchy allows for the emergence in both non-urban and urban communities; however, different mechanisms allow for the maintenance of CES. In a community thriving on the good ole' boy network, girls navigate the culture adhering to the local gender regime. When an at-risk girl, devoid of a "good" family name, fails to obey expectations, she is incriminated, groomed into a lifestyle destined for law enforcement contact. Such girls engage in maladaptive coping mechanisms to deal with their hushed experiences. Girls like Madelyn engaged in chronic drug use and cutting. Christine, a girl out to find safety and belonging, had fresh cuts on her arm. The prison bought some sense of immediate safety, but she lacked a sense of belonging. So many girls and women had extensive substance abuse histories. They self-medicated to numb their emotional pain. Girls cut themselves to feel. They swallowed too many pills for either real suicide attempts or desperate pleas for help. They used their bodies to gain affection as this is the only way for attention they found; these behaviors label girls as delinquents, no-name deviants. Indirect evidence confirms a connection between CSEs and the adult criminal justice system similar to the work of Colman, Kim, Mitchell-Herzfeld, and Shady (2009), who longitudinally studied incarcerated girls. They found that 81% of the sample were rearrested, 69% were convicted, and 34% were incarcerated as adults.

Rural communities may be devoid of violent crime rates observed in urban terrain, but these girls did not feel safe there. They feel unsafe due to lived experiences of oppression within a CSE that allows boys and men to violate them. Angie, the dominatrix murderer, is now spending 15 years at the Topeka Correctional Facility for protecting herself from years of physical and sexual abuse. Her children's handprints were the ones mentioned during the *Author's preface*. The handprints were sad reminders of lost family and dreams. Yet, Americans are conditioned to think of these girls and women as hardened people seeking to do harm. Harm was more likely produced by the flirtatious male prison guards than it was from the inmates themselves. The flirtatious and sometimes sexual harassing behavior has become commonplace, resulting in fear for safety and trust.

Movements such as #metoo have created momentum in garnering national attention on the issue of male dominance and female sexual assault. The movement calls for men to become involved in the perpetuation of sexual environments. Men who are bystanders should be upstanders. Men who see something, should say something. It is on the everyday folk to create such friction within local communities, one that acknowledges harm bestowed upon young women.

Girls everywhere have grown accustomed to a sexualized life at the hands of boys and men, and cultural norms instruct them to shy away from challenging the hierarchy. Added to the mix, girls in small communities learn the value in one's name. They grow up fearful of abuse and are shunned for speaking up. They know their stories will not matter. They feel they do not matter. Even if rural communities did show care for each person, they lack the structural ability to provide help. When budgets are cut, money is left in urban areas with a larger demand for service. This corrupted version of supply and demand results in nonexistent supply. It is a civic

duty to ensure that young girls can access local services. It is upon citizens to shed layers of stigma and oppression, to allow girls and women to feel safe enough to pursue assistance. Until deep-rooted values of rural life shift, many girls will continue to feel unsafe in close-knit communities, where everyone looks out for one another—unless you are unwanted.

The heart of the current research lies in stories of these young women, bringing to light their strife and struggles in tiny little Kansas places, large in home-grown traditions different, at least in part, from their city cousins. Their perceptions are real and raw, their insight invaluable. One might contend that a young girl’s perspective is partial or even contorted. Perception is, of course, their own reality. The next chapter takes the analysis a step further, revealing local reports and impressions from working professionals within ten rural counties in Kansas; many include the home communities of the girls in this study. To increase confidentiality, Chapter 5 addresses findings by first congregating counties into three clusters, based on their structural similarities. The chapter concludes with a comparison of accounts between the two groups and review of a “magical question” posed to all participants.

## Chapter 5 - Community truths...and half-truths

*There's a teacher and football coach here who was alleged to have sexually harassed this particular student, and the lawsuit goes on to say that...the school is alleged to have known about it since the early 2000s and has never really disciplined the teacher and has continued to sort of allow him to create this sexually charged environment with girls. So here we are, pretending like everything is rainbows and unicorns. –Cluster 1 interview*

### Author's preface

*After hearing stories of incarcerated young women, I turned my attention to those working within the trenches of Kansas (various community actors in 10 rural areas). The excerpt above came from a conversation with a woman working as a professional in the legal field; it was, at once, one of the most interesting and disappointing interviews of all. The interviewee discussed her anxiousness about sharing ugly truths of her community. Her story, and the stories of many other community workers, shed light on the sexualized culture that runs rampant in rural communities, something they agree is “brushed under the rug.” Professionals working within these communities also point to collective problems such as bullying, which are tolerated by, and even instigated by, teachers. Context seems important—communities known for their tight-knit atmosphere, but one where most members only look out for their own.*

*Community stakeholders from a range of professional backgrounds were interviewed, many also possessing extensive experience in related fields. Most participants were eager to be interviewed. Many were hopeful that their willingness to participate would help serve as a catalyst for policy conversation. Some participants were more candid than others; for example, the one quoted above wanted to be transparent, believing it was the only way to seek change. Others, however, presented only a glowing image of their community. When asked directed questions about previously disclosed concerns, typical responses included, “I don't have information on that.” Most are interested in seeking positive change for their youth.*



## Chapter 5 framework

As Chapter 5 begins, a brief review of rural Kansas is provided. Next, *Community clusters* provides a brief reminder of the methodology involved in clustering the ten Kansas counties into three clusters. This technique serves to further protect locations and confidentiality of community participants. Following that, *Sunnyvale: Cluster 1(frontier)*, *Springfield: Cluster 2 (rural)*, and *Langley Falls: Cluster 3 (urban)* provide excerpts and evidence supporting and challenging the coercive sexual environments phenomenon and its influence on girls and women within the justice system. Because of theoretical interest in very small places, frontier counties (represented by Sunnyvale) constitute a major portion of community data, followed by Springfield (rural); Langley Falls, Cluster 3, provides comparative data from urban counties. *The magical question* section presents a sense of hope as expressed by community actors, focusing on imagined solutions. The *Discussion* section recaps major findings, underscores unexpected results, and advances significant implications as they relate to an imagined future.

### Kansas, 2018

Kansas's centralized placement within the United States supplies interesting interpretations of local culture and ideology of "haves" and "have nots" in the so-called "heartland" of America. Kansas is growing slower than the rest of the U.S. population. Kansas is experiencing an increase in aging and increasingly diverse pockets within urban areas (Hunt & Panas, 2018). Corie Brown (2018) recently authored a piece in *The New Food Economy*, entitled, "Rural Kansas is dying. I drove 1,800 miles to find out why." The opening statement read, "Most Americans experience Kansas from inside their cars, eight hours of cruise-controlled tedium on their way to someplace else" (Brown, 2018, p. 1). Current population estimates suggest that over

the next 50 years, Corie Brown is at least partially wrong. The population of Kansas is estimated to grow by 25.1 percent between 2016 and 2066 (Hunt & Panas, 2018).

The remainder of this chapter carries the reader into the depths of Kansas and its mostly vacant communities, all through the eyes of those in positions to know about girls and the tribulations they face in rural Kansas. Although Brown criticized Kansas farmers for not adapting to more “modern” ways, Brown conveys hope that someday Kansans will be able give “passers-through a new reason to slow, roll down their windows, and decide to stay a while” (p. 14). Community workers provide valuable insight into the current state of girls in small, often isolated places, as well as comparison to reports from incarcerated girls and women. The rich nature of their contributions hopefully will encourage any reader to slow down and stay for a while.

### **County clusters**

As outlined in Chapter 3, ten Kansas counties were targeted for place-level exploration, based on rurality and geographic location within Kansas. To further increase confidentiality, community actors are not referred to by their professional affiliation. In some instances, identifying their role may risk identifying the county and even the individual participant. Instead, references are made more generally; where possible, the description may refer to someone as school personnel, law enforcement officer, judge, and so forth.

Prior to identifying themes and concepts within each of the three county clusters, an analysis of audio recordings was conducted within the software Nvivo. The basic analysis provided a foundation, while then allowing identification or absence of various themes and concepts within each of the three clusters. Because the intent of community interviews was to gather information about community life, Chapter 5 brings a heavy focus on community

infrastructure, local gender regime, and perceptions of community characteristics that influence creation of coercive sexual environments within frontier and rural communities. Urban-based data afford comparisons based on size-of-place and culture.

### **Sunnyvale: Cluster 1**

From this point forward, Cluster 1 is referred to as Sunnyvale. In total, 14 interviews were completed in Sunnyvale. The three counties represent Kelly, Staley, and Stokes counties (pseudonyms). As displayed in **Error! Reference source not found.**, Sunnyvale communities represent areas in Kansas with the least number of people per square mile. From 1960 until 2016, populations of frontier counties have decreased by 41.1 percent (Hunt & Panas, 2018).

Sunnyvale counties are aging communities with larger numbers of residents over 65, together with lower numbers of youth (those under 18). The number of children living in poverty is higher than the state average, and the median household income is well below state average. Many would say that Sunnyvale is the type of community that operates under the good ole' boy system. Patriarchal traditions reign high, accompanied by marks of a closed system. Most say new families are encouraged to join their community while actual practices reflect a rigid form of inclusion/exclusion.

#### **We want to see your family connection [and assigned gender]**

The three counties within this cluster report fewer than six people per square mile. Locals describe their communities as close-knit, with most people having a strong family tie. Without a family tie, or name, these communities tend to feel closed-off and uninviting to so-called outsiders. Newcomers are required to go out of their way to feel accepted and to become part of the community, as illustrated by comments from a court services officer, county attorney, and extension agent:

*Um ... I would say it's an aging community. It's very closed-off, meaning you have to kinda know somebody [already] to come and be accepted.*

*Um, I would say that maybe it [Stokes County] can be a little exclusive. Like not necessarily super accepting of outsiders. And if people don't recognize you or know who you are, I think that you can experience a little bit of a chill here.*

*I don't know if outsider's the right word, but if you aren't connected with the right groups or the right networks it's hard to hear about what's going on, if that makes sense. I did move, um, from the outside into this community. It took engaging with, it took finding a church to really get to meet people. So yeah, it's been, it's a very, it's, it's a big challenge.*

The three quotes above represent the majority opinion from frontier counties. Another interviewee explained that outsiders have a tough time adjusting, and that money dictates whether outsiders stay or leave. That is, if solvent, newcomers are likely to move back out soon; if not financially able, they stay “out of necessity.”

A handful of frontier interviews expressed a positive view of the community. One participant, a local minister, described her hometown as a “*place that genuinely cares*” and is a, “*really special place.*” Responses from this interviewee continued to report a feeling of “*unity.*” Even among interviewees who were born and raised in their frontier community, though, very few shared this perception.

Community interviews echoed expressions from inmates in this study; almost all addressed the role of family name and ties. Recall that all inmate interviews were with young women who self-reported as outsiders. Popkin et al. (2015) point to low collective efficacy and dense ties as hurdles in achieving unity. However, in rural communities, the concept of collective efficacy takes on a much different face. These rural communities are not full of violent crime and loose associations; rather, close associations are high. One community actor found that she had to constantly defend herself, projecting as a “local” to gain acceptance; even her professional

role was not enough to garner acceptance. She had to repeatedly remind locals about her (loose) family connection:

*I think there is popularity, and that's, you know, based on what you are doing at school, what your family is doing, and if you have the generational reputation. I know that I do find myself explaining my family tie to the county a lot, even though I moved here as a grown adult. My reputation as a professional is highly regarded, and yet I still have to say, "Well, this is my family tie," you know, even though our last names aren't the same, you know, and whatnot.*

Small town communities want to see the local connection: family. Family association is a huge determinate in forging collective efficacy in frontier and rural places but also a source of exclusion. While collective efficacy reflects a general social solidarity, it also refers to the ability (and willingness) to control its members and create a safe and orderly environment. In these non-urban places, family ties, together with wealth, race, and reputation, serve as a sort of “check list” as insiders determine how others should be regarded. Further, because family reigns supreme, generational patterns tend to homogenize the place and the culture. Locals want to connect the web of information from grandparents to parents and even from sibling to sibling:

*And so, there is a perceived bias based on, you know, who you are. And you know, even the newspaper ... when I first moved here I liked make fun of it. And now I don't even make fun of it because I think it's kind of stupid, but. . . maybe there's a family with four kids. And the younger kids are now at their time, prime time in high school. And they're doing well in basketball or refereeing or whatever. And like the paper would preface the article saying, "So and so is the youngest sibling of the three-time state champion older brother," and it's like, well if this individual is earning the right to be recognized, why do you have to put it on their older sibling who's in college and probably doesn't care anymore, you know? And not just historically, but it's definitely always making it known that this is the hierarchy.*

“The hierarchy” seems well understood and firmly in place. Even when accidents occur, the response may be different, based on who is involved. The interviewee in the above quote talked about the recent death of a high school athlete killed in a vehicular accident while under the influence of alcohol. She described the community’s response as “romanticized” and said that

because of the family's name, the mentioning of alcohol involvement and under-age drinking was not addressed. She felt this was only true because of who the student was:

*And I think had this individual had a different last name, a different reputation, a different experience it [drinking and driving] would have been all over the cause of death.*

This community official believed that if unlawful behaviors of youth are not addressed during adolescence, the criminal justice system might receive a surge in adult cases, some years down the road:

*Just to demonstrate that this is really a consequence because I'm of the opinion that the justice system tends to be more forgiving before you're an adult, so you need to learn those life lessons now before it's too late.*

Despite concerns quoted above, this interviewee said that she is committed to staying in this community as both she and her husband have good jobs. Yet, she is fearful of her own children's future, primarily because she has only loose connections to a few locals. With newly appointed officials on the school board, she is hopeful the family name and gender ideology will shift before her kids enter school. However, cultures are highly resistant to change.

Throughout all three clusters, many spoke about the "haves" and the "have nots," suggesting that reputation also hinges on resources. For Sunnyvale participants, 90% mentioned the notion of "haves" and "have nots." Previous CSE literature suggests that CSEs emerge from communities of concentrated disadvantage. Although appearing to be credible, such findings ignore nuanced hierarchies within rural communities. One director of juvenile corrections pointed to the wide spread in status:

*Okay, so you've got a combination of almost the haves and have nots. You have these very wealthy farmers, white farmers that have farmed thousands, and thousands, and thousands of acres. And then you have this very poor minority population.*

As suggested here, not only is there an income gap, but the balance may be quite different than in urban areas. For example, a small community may have only one or two families who are affluent by traditional standards. Others gain clout through non-financial means such as family name.

Belonging is very much at stake in small rural communities with few other outlets or options. As one law enforcement officer observed, the adjustment is especially challenging for youth. In larger schools, several factors may contribute to acceptance, but rural youth are judged almost solely on family status. In turn, “outsiders” are more likely to be targeted as delinquents. The officer, clearly uneasy, indicated that such youth outsiders are almost certainly destined to fail in the community. In whatever form, reputation in frontier land is golden.

Institutions, even in small communities, become ingrained with local customs. For example, community actors, joining voices of young women we heard from, believe that most youth should and do approach a trusted school official when in need. At the same time, an overwhelming number of interviewees found the school significantly lacking or averting responsibility. One interviewee acknowledged that students should be able to turn to a school counselor, but her perception was that this position was filled by an untrustworthy individual. Further, students in a small community doubly fear that their confidentiality will not be honored. Unfortunately, especially in some small schools, even trained officials may come to accept community biases and informal information channels. Students who come forward may then be in further jeopardy.

Sensitive topics are even more underground in small places. About repeated sexual issues in one community, the county attorney said:

*In a perfect world, I want to believe that what's happening here isn't happening everywhere else, and that maybe things are better other places, but that's probably naïve.*

The above quote came from a “homegrown” citizen, returning to the community after college. She seemed invested in her community, but as a woman in a male-dominated field, she was sorely aware of layers of challenges within Stokes County. This interviewee provided several examples of sexism she experiences. According to her, gender norms for girls “*are more implied than actually expressed.*” Names are not only stand-alone markers for status but also carry gendered consequences, as explicated in the next section.

### **You can’t report that! He is a boy...and a Smith**

The previous section ended with a suggestion of gender norms as implicit, unstated. Although that may be true of less obvious forms of gendered norms such as navigating work expectations, the message becomes much clearer when girls take note of sexualized experiences. Further, latent messages are not necessarily spoken, but gain power when they are widely accepted and unambiguous. Especially for frontier and rural girls, the message about sexual assault is distinct and precise: Boys will be boys. One community actor discussed a 14-year-old having sexual intercourse with an adult male. When the behaviors were brought to the attention of the public, the response was:

*"Oh, well, boys are gonna be boys. And boys are gonna do what they know." So, I think if there is sexual assault, I think it's very much swept under the rug.*

One county attorney pointed to local attitudes toward widespread sexual assault:

*Because in my experience, just as a woman, as a female in general, I feel like almost every single friend of mine, everybody I know, every woman I know, from my mom to aunts to friends to cousins, has a story to tell about sexually inappropriate behavior, right? Even, like when I was in high school. I know that there were things that were happening that girls didn't tell their parents about because they knew it wouldn't matter, you know?*



Sexual harassment and assault are often ignored especially when status of important community members (i.e., the community itself) is at stake. Young women seem to know that their sexual assault “*wouldn’t matter*” regardless of who they told. Perhaps secure in its patriarchal traditions, small communities seem to integrate its local customs, such as reputation, with strong male bias. For example, when referring to the Title IX case involving sexual harassment by a coach/teacher, *all* interviewees in this county brought up the pending case. One said that, “*As a coach, he was winning the school state titles, so he was untouchable and amazing.*” Such an environment supports sexualization and harassment of girls and women if something of perceived value is gained or lost. In many cases, reputation and family name are enough to silence violence against girls and women.

One interviewee, who had worked in a number of helping professions, provided several cases in which the assault was hushed due to family status. Her comments suggest that the acceptance of assault, and fear of reporting, have realigned girls’ thinking. They are no longer able to recognize it as abuse:

*I believe part of the under-reporting is attributed to wanting to keep it in the family, let's just not stir the pot here. You guys were out on a date, and you asked for it, and that feeds into my second part. I'm not sure the girls even recognize that they are being sexually assaulted because I believe that that there is this atmosphere of, you kinda asked for it, he's a good boy. These upper white middle-class families do not wanna bring that kind of attention down on their family, they're ashamed of it. Whether it was, you were going together, and he solicited some nudes from you, and then kinda passed it around the locker room. You just kinda had that coming 'cause good girls don't do that, so shut up about it, kinda deal. I do feel like there are two types of dynamics-not recognizing that anyone had the right to do that, and then families not wanting to bring that on themselves, that type of scrutiny, and potential humiliation.*

The excerpt above is loaded with gendered experiences specific to environments identified as coercive sexual environments. Coercive sexualized environments encourage a code of silence based on name, reputation, and, as we see now, gender.

The silencing of sexual assaults is common in frontier and rural communities. While family name and ties heavily influence the nature of silencing, other local customs can also affect the process and outcome. Many community stakeholders identified athletics as a major source of entertainment and status in small communities; some identified football games as the only source of entertainment. In frontier communities, football is life for most community citizens. One interviewee provided a specific example about a boy, his school, and the victim. The boy was a star athlete, the girl a cheerleader. The two dated. After breaking up, they were together on a school bus where he touched her inappropriately. The perpetrator was called to the principal's office and admitted to what happened, but the mother of the victim said, "*We don't want ruin his life, we don't want him to get in trouble. Like we don't want this to be a big thing or whatever.*"

The community actor pointed out that the school is a mandated reporter yet only reported the incident days later. When law enforcement questioned the principal, he lied about the alleged perpetrator's admission, saying he liked the kid and did not want to see him get into trouble. Subsequently, the perpetrator was suspended from one athletic game. One game for sexual assault. The same victim, a 16-year-old girl, was caught drinking at a high school football game. She was kicked off the cheerleading team and forced to give speeches to all grade schools telling them what she had done. The interviewee went on:

*So, she was like publicly shamed for having been caught drinking, where he is suspended, so they obviously believe that he had done something wrong- And what he had done wrong was sexually assault a student on a school bus, and he was playing basketball the next week. So, I don't know what planet they're living on.*

The message to girls is clear, football is more important than addressing sexual assault. Football is more important than justice for victims. This example is recited from a singular incident, yet many professionals from other communities shared very similar stories. Although the negative

focus is pointed at school officials, it points to a larger cultural issue, one especially prevalent in small closely-knit communities.

Community stakeholders often spoke about frontier communities failing to intervene on behalf of girls. A combination of rural culture and lack of resources are relevant. The culture supports the intentional oversight of helping girls while structurally, frontier communities lack services. Several interviewees spoke of the role of the church—also a gate to local acceptance—as a sort of surrogate to official resources. As one drives through Kansas, the abundance of religious billboards reigns large; a giant billboard outside of their town welcomes “all” visitors. Interestingly, one can also easily find any number of signs related to a moral panic such as abortions or the selling and purchasing of pornography. Appendix H includes a few of these signs around Kansas. The next section discussed nuances of cultural and structural services linked to rural places.

### **Cultural and structural services [and disservices]**

Community actors were asked about the community’s willingness to intervene on behalf of youth in their community. For some, the response suggested a culture dismissive of such calls for help; for others, a lack of community resources explained the community’s failure. They all talked about system failure. For example, one interviewee said there are mixed perceptions about reporting:

*It’s like, “Why would I call it in if it’s not even going to get looked at?” There’s this perception out there too, of, “If I turn something in to DCF, the family’s not going to get looked at, or there’s not going to be a wellness check.” I think some people want to help, but at some point, it’s like, “Well, it’s just going to sit in the system and they’re going to ignore it.”*

The perception in frontier, rural, and even urban counties is that the Department of Children and Families (DCF) would either do nothing or swoop in and take someone’s child away. Such fears

were also referred to about law enforcement. Like themes arising from the incarcerated girls and young women interviewed, believability comes into question. Believability depends on the parties involved:

*I think that it depends on the victim. I think believability of the victim is somewhat based on reputation. I think the person being accused influences how it will be investigated and enforced.*

Others underscore the complexity of local culture where everyone knows everyone, making their professional job even more difficult:

*I think it's a larger issue. I think that especially in rural communities, your neighbor could be the person who's responsible for investigating the accusations and so you know there are gray areas with professionalism. How do you do your job but also maintain the type of personal life that you want for your own self? I think that some of our professionals struggle with that.*

Community actors often expressed frustration and a lack of insight into *why* harmful behaviors can continue. The obvious explanation is community affiliation and power of the good ole' boy network. They have a job at stake. They have a reputation at stake. They have a family name at stake. However, the conversation often stopped there. The participants did not mention abstractions such as patriarchal structures. They did, however, talk a lot about resources.

All community actors in all three clusters indicated that mental health services in rural areas are severely lacking. When they exist at all, services are poor yet expensive. With families struggling to pay their bills, seeking services for their youth is not always a possibility. Most community actors pointed out that services are usually reserved for those with money. However, the money only gets them services; the stigma of receiving such services remains. Most privileged families are willing to drive outside of their community to seek help. When services are lacking, community persons such as clergy, are stepping into those roles, but privilege of information is uncertain:

*And I think even with the school counselor or clergy you know the people that are stepping into the places. I don't want to say that their heart isn't in the right place, but I think we're all human and unless you are bound by the laws protecting mental health and whatever, I don't know that confidentiality is always protected.*

Some professionals felt a deep obligation associated with their position. When speaking with one participant working in the corrections field, it was obvious that she felt part of her duties included recognizing and addressing past trauma while trying to serve as a prosocial model for youth. Though the stereotypical image of a corrections worker is one who monitors compliance, in frontier counties, roles are often blurred:

*I can't unfortunately undo all the really awful things these adults have done to their teenagers. I can't undo that, and I can't make 'em unlearn that. What I can do is find them some positive breaks from that particular reality and start introducing them to other ways of looking at life, and if I can do that then that's gonna feed on itself. If I can get them to start seeing some value, and being around people who are doing positive things, then in turn have them doing positive things, then I have the chance to make them contemplate their current circumstances.*

Relying on social work-type services from a corrections worker is a reactive approach, and one not reliable from place to place. The frontier mentality is that services are lacking because services are not needed:

*I think, like most small communities, the general philosophy is that if we needed the service, we would have had the service. Because we don't have the service, we obviously don't need the service.*

Community stakeholders in frontier communities identified two significant barriers to helping girls and women—a cultural lag or impotence in helping behaviors, and a lack of quality resources. Changing community culture to one supportive of assisting all girls and women is a slow, challenging process, but providing the actual services is not. Certainly, financial concerns emerge, but with proper motivation and training, even existing community resources (such as

schools, churches) can help girls in their earliest moments of need. Such a proactive impetus, rather than harsh intervention behind prison walls, would mark significant and positive change.

### **Sunnyvale summary**

Frontier counties pride themselves as being a close-knit community where families build on generations of history. Interviews with local community professionals confirm elements of a coercive sexualized environment, one that exploits rural customs and structures. Local versions of patriarchy, coupled with family name and gendered expectations, drive criteria for inclusion and exclusion; girls considered outsiders bear the brunt of an oppressive system.

The good ole' boy system, as a product of rural patriarchy, lays the foundation for all community interactions as well as the emergence of coercive sexual environments. Non-urban CSEs share urban origins but distinct maintenance mechanisms. The local gender regime dictates that, "boys will be boys," and women in power are either nonexistent, or continually challenged. Small communities lend little in terms of opportunity or role models for young women, especially those on the outskirts of full acceptance; such outing often breeds victim-blaming and/or the "blind eye" phenomenon with threats to the community's standing. Responses to a continuum of behaviors reflect local culture, even when locals recognize its disparities, as illustrated in the example of a teacher being widely known to "*talk to girls in a sexual manner [and] have sex with students.*" According to these community professionals, some school officials choose to minimize and hide the behavior to protect, or at least purportedly to protect the community.

An unanticipated finding extends some reason for optimism. At least two institutions were named over and over as potential sources for positive intervention. The most obvious is the school, with its reach toward the community's population of youth. Nearly all (96.6%) of

participants referenced the school. The other is the role of the local church, which holds strong significance in rural places. Over half (53.3%) of participants referenced the church. Both institutions face challenges. Schools suffer from lack of enough resources and training; budgets have been slashed to the bone in this state. The church's participation depends on its leadership and on a select group of people; those not closely involved in the church are viewed as outsiders, which also means they are outside the jurisdiction of healthy intervention. The following section addresses a cluster with slightly greater population than these frontier communities.

### **Springfield: Cluster 2**

Cluster 2 is referred to as Springfield; 20 interviews were completed with community professionals. Springfield counties are less rural than Sunnyvale but still have an old-town close-knit milieu. The average county population is around 11,000 people and they continue to drop. From 1960 to 2016, rural counties in Kansas have decreased by 22.2% (Hunt & Panas, 2018). Like Sunnyvale, they include a larger aging population with fewer youth and low availability to community resources. Springfield also includes one unique Kansas community with regard to racial/ethnic composition. The foreign-born population makes up 18% compared to the Kansas average of 6.9. Several of the interviewees reported that they believe the diverse cultural makeup accounts for this county bearing one of the state's highest teenage pregnancy rates. Related, the percentage of high school completion rate is much lower than the overall state average. Still, the county fits within the Springfield cluster based on other community demographics.

#### **Dichotomies: You're either good or bad**

Springfield responses were consistent with those from Sunnyvale. For example, one participant talked about newcomers struggling to feel accepted. She said most incoming residents feel "*pretty isolated*" but that they can become more engaged within the church. Like frontier

members, locals in rural communities are skeptical of newcomers, according to a court services officer and extension agent:

*On the outside, it is a clean-cut community with nice people. They are a close-knit community. It's hard to get in the cliques, so to speak. The old timers view new people as a threat to their community. They act nice on the outside, but they can hold you at arm's length. I've watched our community run off several doctors because they were not from here, they were different. Some were women, some were colored women, some were Americans, but of another ethnic background, and they did not stay very long.*

*So, you know, it took me a long time to be accepted or to understand the politics of the community, I would say. Everybody knows everybody's business to a degree.*

With a lower population density, rural citizens inevitably know one another's business. When one's "business" threatens status quo of the in-crowd, they may be outed and the acceptance label can be quickly revoked:

*It's a good community. It's a nice community. It's a tight-knit community. Once you kind of step outside the circle, you're outside of it. It's hard to get back in.*

Being part of the in-crowd includes adhering to local gender norms. Gender norms are usually regarded as "old-fashioned" within rural counties. One extension agent provided an example of gender norms related to athletics:

*Like our softball team, they've gone to state for the last two or three years, and so I think some of those [community members] are super traditional, who we talk about as the good old boys, that probably almost frown upon what the girls are doing in sports. Because you do home economics, and that's it.*

Others agreed with the gender-traditional characteristic. In rural communities, domestic labor, as covered in home economics, is still the standard labor enacted by girls and women, shunned by boys and men. The following excerpts were shared by another extension agent:

*Gender norms are still pretty old-fashioned: I think we're still traditional a little bit in the old gender, where the women cook, and the men do the farm work. I think I've seen that change in my 25 years here, but I feel people have pretty rich traditional values.*



*And you're a woman, you don't know anything, you know? Or, about farming because that's not your place, your place is in the home. Well, sometimes, boys will be boys attitude a little bit, you know? Bankers are male, and attorneys are male. We've see that changing so it's not as traditional. We've had a woman car mechanic. The county attorney is a woman. The county clerk is a woman. The county treasurer is a woman.*

Although some participants recognized some progress in gendered fields, they failed to mention other reports I heard of sexual oppression within the workplace. All of the female participants spoke to this point with a total of 191 references. These women continue a daily fight with forms of sexualized harassment and overall oppression, as evidenced by this court services officer:

*What I have observed is it's very confusing for a woman or, including young girls or females of any kind of any age, because there are a few women in very high positions. But then we have a majority of people who don't think that they really deserve those jobs because they're women. They're not doing their job right because they're too emotional, or there's just kind of a double speak. We want the women to be in office, but yet we don't think that they're good enough to do the job that they have.*

Responses were mixed on community members believing their community was “somewhere in the middle” of being progressive. While one interview recognized the presence of a woman mechanic, another pointed out that boys work on cars and girls cater to their needs:

*If boys are working on a car, the females are probably sitting over watching them on the porch or getting them something to drink. I mean, there really is kind of that mentality here as well.*

In reflection of gender norms and the local gender regime, frontier and rural communities share many similarities. Communities want to present an image of openness, progression, and inclusivity, but the underlying mechanisms work hard to ensure the status quo. Equality is something nice to talk about but not something that is practiced.

### **Discriminatory practices—Practice makes perfect**

Similar to frontier communities, rural professionals often spoke to discrimination. In some interviews, discrimination referenced race, wealth, athleticism, or other family characteristics. Specific to sexual assault, this same community lens was used to assess accusations. This remains a product of one's name and reputation in overall believability and placement of blame:

*You hate to say that's even true, but I think I would say, if a certain person in the community steps up and says something [sexual assault] happened, then they would get a lot more attention, unfortunately, than someone else.*

Victim-blaming is, of course, not specific to frontier communities; rather it is a product of larger systemic issues. Several community actors discussed different cases of underage impregnated girls. They all called into question why no formal charges are pressed. Their assumptions were that the males involved came from families of high status. The following examples were provided by a court service professional and a school principal:

*Kids are going to have sex. They've been having sex forever. We've had several cases of rape against teenage boy and younger teenage girl. Here's the weird part: The ones that do know about it, they're like, "Well, she shouldn't have put herself in that position," and it's like, "Wait a minute." I mean, haven't we educated people enough over the last 25 years, that rape is not because the girl looks like a slut? It doesn't have anything to do with that.*

*I could see families trying to, trying to hush things [sexual assault] up for either the victim or the person accused of doing it.*

Other school officials referenced the sexualized school dress code. One school counselor discussed his daily involvement in policing the dress code for girls, noting that they “*had a new principal coming in, and the new principal was in no position to disagree with everyone else.*” The community wanted no “commotion” over girls’ dress and appearance. So-called “real men” do not challenge the oppressive conditions of girls.

**Help wanted: Where no resources exist**

The overwhelming discussion for Springfield interviews focused on community resources and interventions. There were 274 references given from 90% of the participants, to community services within the Springfield counties; they reported that rural communities are (only) reactive to issues. These communities do not believe they need help until the help is needed:

*Well, I think overall, they really need mental health, better or more mental health options. It's really hard to educate people 'cause people don't want the education 'til they need it.*

For youth, some participants were concerned about confidentiality when young people seek help. Among fear and family standing, they fail to seek help, setting off a critical snowball effect.

According to one extension agent, consequences are severe:

*You know, and that it'll get back to their parents. Like if they made an appointment at the doctor's office, somehow, they are afraid that their parents would know. My former daycare provider, she was like, "Oh my gosh, Lauren's [local teen] pregnant." And I was like, "Oh no, there's no way she could be." She goes to my church, she's this good little girl, she wouldn't do that. Then, three or four months later, had this baby and then, I guess killed it. And then, found herself in prison. And so, I felt like she was too embarrassed 'cause she comes from a good family name. She must've felt like she couldn't tell her mom and must've not have felt like there was anybody she could tell.*

Certainly, young women everywhere may hesitate to ask for help in such dire circumstances. Yet, kids in rural areas understand that confidentiality is virtually absent in their tiny communities; they are isolated and are faced with very few options. When kids do reach out, they typically seek school officials. As we have seen in Springfield, schools are an imperfect system for dealing with such issues in small schools. Further, often understaffed, many counselors are not prepared to engage in therapeutic services. Even when community mental health providers are accessible, the quality is perceived as poor:

*Mental health is very limited here. We have one agency, Canvas Behavioral Health. As a corrections worker, I do not make referrals there unless it's an*

*urgency situation, and then I'm hoping that they bump them over somewhere else. I know that the people that do have the financial means to go out of county, go out of county. The ones that don't have the means, just don't go at all.*

Also relatively unique to small communities, family reputation is at stake, which means seeking services outside the county, which eliminates most families without significant financial means for doing so. Like frontier counties, some youth and parents utilize their church as a treatment provider. One participant, with a background in ministry, described why she left her local church:

*We've [her husband and herself] left the church, not because we don't believe, but because people eat their pastors for lunch. So, you know, we're supposed to be miracle workers, and (laughs) we can only do so much. Um, I think that people like to believe that they're very religious, but they don't really know God. And ... or, "Here, fix my kid." And you know we can't do that.*

Unfortunately, some communities respond to treatment needs of girls by incriminating them. Such practice seemed more prevalent in Springfield. For example, if a girl runs away from home, she may be placed in juvenile detention, followed by a stint of out-of-home placements. Rather than addressing the cause of her desire to run, detention seems easier. Depending on the profession, some participants saw this as an issue:

*'Cause she doesn't just run away for the fun of it. So instead of picking the girl up, throwing her in detention when she does get found, and then sending her to a group home or something, or foster care somewhere else, and not do anything with the family, or take care of the problem, the initial problem, we're not making- we're not fixing a problem at all. We're not correcting anything. We're making it worse.*

Responses such as the one above indicate a willingness to accept and adopt proactive rather than reactive approaches. However, structural barriers remain. As one example, Cedar County had a population around 40,000; current estimates place their population at just over 20,000, the highest drop in all ten selected counties. Cedar County also tops the charts with nearly 30% of kids under 18 living in poverty. One extension agent shared some of the hardships:

*So there's not a lot of community service options. You know there's no public transportation or anything like that to get people from where they need to be. And so I think young families are moving out just for opportunities for their kids. And older people are moving out just because of access in trying to get to places they need to get, to get to.*

Although the interviewee's focus was not in corrections, she was aware of systemic issues such as childhood adversity and generational poverty. She recognized that many kids in this community experience a range of traumatic events at home, which then negatively affect health, school functioning, and other areas of their life. Community interventions are grossly lacking—in number, accessibility, and quality. Yet, the young women in Chapter 4 all asked for a safe place, somewhere they could go for help and support. A county attorney reported:

*There's no safe place. I mean, if somebody went in and told their principal, "I need help." The first phone call would be to a parent and, you know, whether the parent's abusive or the parent just doesn't understand or is embarrassed, it may not be the ending that we'd like to think everybody would then go get the kids the help they need—but they don't.*

The lack of follow-through for girls is not just a school issue, parent concern, criminal justice weakness—it is all of the above, plus more. For a plethora of reasons, adults are not acting on behalf of the welfare of their youth, especially those girls targeted as outsiders.

### **Springfield summary**

Springfield differs little from Sunnyvale. Both frontier and rural communities experience the same issues related to broader sexualized environments, stronghold of last name, and density of local ties. Surprisingly, by documented numbers and community reports, rural communities have less access to services than do frontier communities. Participants were unable to provide an explanation for the gross lack of services compared to other communities. Reluctance to seek services is high in both community settings while community stakeholders acknowledge and confirm traumatic experiences of young women. A natural starting place for change, for both

Sunnyvale and Springfield counties, is the school followed by the church. Stakeholders in both clusters referred to a lack of appropriate response by school officials. Frontier and rural county members may also turn to their church, an institution not designed with treatment services as top priority. When official, affordable services are lacking, community structures like the school and church are vital to provide initial contact for girls in need.

According to the professionals interviewed in this study, the entire system is in shambles. There are small pockets of invested community actors—those who recognize the institutional issues and know the solutions. They are small in number and ill-equipped to override a system dominated by patriarchy. There is truth behind the clichéd expression, “It takes a village to raise a child.” The community owns their local culture; they control sexually charged environments produced by patriarchy. They can discourage maintenance of the “good ole’ boy system.” As expressed by these community actors, they can see little immediate initiatives for improvement. They believe that without social movement on these broader issues, the village (frontier and rural communities) may continue to raise entitled boys into aggressive men and abused girls into incarcerated women.

### **Langley Falls: Cluster 3**

Cluster 3, the urban counties, is referred to as Langley Falls and is based on 16 interviews with professionals; it serves as a comparison to frontier and rural communities. These communities are dense, have access to more community resources, and lack the small-town framework where everyone knows everyone else’s business. Contrary to Sunnyvale and Springfield, Langley Falls has experienced a population increase since 2010, an increase that is higher than the state average. Several communities within this cluster also demonstrate qualities that differ from most Kansas communities. One county is known for its wealth, not just in

Kansas, but also across the United States. The average household income is almost double that of all other counties within the sample. These citizens pride themselves on being “resource wealthy” and “affluent.” Even with this skewed demographic, overall responses from community workers in this county remained consistent with other Langley Falls counties. A second unique county is associated with the military base that is located within its territory, where diverse populations are more common. Several community workers stated that the community works to welcome new families while others reported a “transient” feel. One interviewee testified that teenagers are known for being pregnant, as this county reports the state’s highest teenage birth rate. His explanation was loose associations between established families as compared to youth from military families. This demographic makes this community “feel” different than others; the military county provided for a unique perspective of long-standing community names.

### **Forget family ties—We’re transient**

Sunnyvale and Springfield communities are known for dense ties and generational family lines. In Langley Falls, family name association is less predominant. As Langley Falls’ community populations have risen, personal connections, in which widespread familiarity with most of the community, has dwindled according to one school principal:

*Probably not as much anymore as it used to be. Years ago when I first came here in the 70s, the late 70s, is when there were certainly family statures that had helped develop the businesses and that in Green County. As they aged out in that, that kind of stature is not as predominant as it used to be.*

Frontier and rural communities create distinctions between outsiders and established community members, even with shrinking populations. Urban counties, with rising populations, have experienced an influx of transient groups. Langley Falls welcomes diversity and appears devoid of an outing culture found in Sunnyvale and Springfield.

Kansas is uniquely centrally positioned within the United States, allowing for access to several major interstates. Urban communities attribute geography and easy access to interstate connections for many of their crime concerns. Some mentioned that individuals make a stop off the interstate and end up residing in the community. In Green County, housing a military base, a juvenile court judge discussed the rarity of seeing the same youth from kindergarten through high school graduation:

*In the rural counties, that's [generational connection] true because the kids are there, they've always been there. We very seldom have a kid that starts kindergarten and graduates with our class in 12th grade because of the fact of the military and the transient population that just come and go.*

The military community participants identified their county as unique. They viewed their populous differently than other urban counties, as adult and juvenile populations vary yearly. A commonality within all three county clusters is wealth and the significance of socioeconomic status. Wealth may be loosely associated with family name in urban counties, but economic wealth is a stronger influence than surname. According to one community corrections worker:

*I think students are also divided up in athletics as well, and social groups. The guys with money and the guys with none. The have and have nots, I guess. I think the haves have more opportunities to get their [court] cases taken care of a certain way, and the have nots kind of deal with court appointed attorneys.*

While Jonesburg County participants described their community as affluent and resource wealthy, they also admitted to pockets of extreme poverty and deprivation. The comments were generated from a range of community workers. The following came from a child-in-need-of-care judge and an extension agent:

*It's always been considered one of the wealthiest. I don't know if it still is, but it's always considered one of the wealthiest counties in the country. But having said that, I mean there are a number of very wealthy people who live in Jonesburg County, but there's also a lot of people who are in families who are struggling.*



*Well, I would probably describe it as one of the more affluent, counties in Kansas, but it's also very diverse economically. There are pockets of great need.*

Some community actors mentioned family name as associated with local professional athletes or chief executive officers of well-known businesses, but those were not common. Aside from these rare exceptions, the “haves” buy their way out of trouble while the “have-nots” struggle to defend themselves.

While urban counties are known for larger populations, they still experience some issues observed in frontier and rural communities. The school remains a significant institution in the lives of girls, but the focus is directed towards athletics, according to one judge:

*I mean, school is pretty important, the high schools still have a large part to play with the activities for kids and then their families would participate in those activities. Maybe you should be looking out for other things like indicators that you know a kid is suffering from depression, a kid is suffering from having problems at home, you know. I mean because we've had some of the cases that I get where we have actual abuse that's going on, and when I finally get the case the kids covered with flippin' bruises all over the place and somebody, somebody in school had to have seen this before.*

While Langley Falls exhibits less of a focus on family name than Sunnyvale or Springfield, the involvement of parents within the school system still serves as a source of power. The message from community workers was that youth of school-involved parents are granted special privilege. Sunnyvale and Springfield shared multiple stories of unfair disadvantage to girls through the school's dress code, but the dress code is policed differently in Langley Falls. Schools are said to focus more on attire associated with gang involvement (e.g. sagging pants) though the gendered policing is not completely absent:

*Where you know because girls will entice boys [sarcasm] and so then let's keep them covered up because you know and it's just like, for goodness sakes, what are you doing to our daughters?*

On many levels, Langley Falls presents differently than Sunnyvale and Springfield. However, they share certain characteristics associated with gendered environments specific to the maintenance of coercive sexual environments. Athletic boys with wealthy families rank much higher than uninvolved girls from abusive homes. With large school enrollments, boys rise to the top, and girls, especially those at risk, are more likely to be lost in fabrics of the inner city.

***...but don't forget the church!***

*Let's put it this way, you know, this is Kansas...*

Regardless of population density, Kansans are confident on one state descriptor. Kansas is faith-based. The religious characterization applies to the frontier counties through the most populated Kansas communities. Like frontier and rural counties, families in urban counties also look to their church for counseling and support. However, in frontier and rural counties, families seek their clergy for help due to a lack of professional services. In Langley Falls, services are available, but families still rely on their faith to provide help and guidance:

*Other than the school system and churches, I don't know of any specific place where a young girl can go and say, "I'm having problems with my mom. I need some help." The options include the school system or their church. I'm just not aware of anything.*

While many Langley Falls participants recognized the role of the church within their community, a school official stated that the church was not enough:

*I know the churches around here say you gotta get kids and their parents back in church, but if we're not gonna be able to do that, then let's at least get the services they need provided to 'em, make them available.*

Regardless of geographic location within Kansas, religion is a source of power and status misused in a vetting process for outsiders' acceptance while serving as an all-encompassing treatment provider, even when some are ill-equipped to do so. In urban counties, treatment options *are* available. In fact, the three Langley Falls counties, compared to the remaining seven

counties, have the highest rates of population to treatment provider ratio. Kansas's statewide ratio is one treatment provider for every 580 inhabitants (1:580). Langley Falls has an average rate of one treatment provider for every 472 inhabitants (1:472). Langley Falls citizens have greater access to treatment providers compared to frontier counties (1:2,273) and rural counties (1:4,519) (County Health Rankings, 2014b). Yet, they still seek counseling services from their clergy and reference a lack of available quality services. Langley Falls is described as resource wealthy; perceptions and professional experience sometimes challenge this label:

*Oh God, no. We just don't have services for kids in the state of Kansas period. There are not sufficient services. We do not have sufficient mental services, we don't have sufficient services for kids in school. No, we just don't have sufficient services.*

One corrections worker talked about the loss of treatment facilities such as Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities as an option for kids with severe mental health needs. While Kansas has removed many out-of-home placements in hopes of addressing needs within the home, workers have noted extreme wait lists reaching into months. Youth in need of inpatient services are going untreated, even within the "affluent" communities of Kansas.

Many community members want more for their local youth. For all local youth. They want to help but, with a shortage of resources, effective treatment is difficult. Rather than addressing the issues once they are identified, some community actors pondered how to help their community:

*The problem all school systems have, in my view, is reaching those children who are in the process of being lost, because of either their home situation or their peer group situations. Those who are obviously not doing well in school, not doing well at home, they're committing crimes, they're taking drugs, they're drinking, they're doing all those things. I'm not saying it's the school system's problem, but, like everyone else, those kids are not reached. Not all, some of them are, but not all of them are reached. I'm not saying that's a school system problem, but I think it's-a community problem.*

One extension agent who provided groups to middle-school girls, offered a poem reflecting her experiences (see Appendix I). The poem reflects a concern about school bullying, trauma, and overall neglect of trauma. The poem ends, “Do we simply allow what is sacred [kids] to fall through the crackled glaze of unmet needs? Who decides which ones and how many?” There is evidence of good faith efforts in Langley Falls and many other counties, but aforethought is mostly absent.

### **Surviving sex...ual assault**

Coercive sexual environment literature addresses local sexualized culture and ecological variables leading to harassment and assault of girls. Curiously, sex trafficking is absent from CSE literature. Within frontier and rural communities, girls and women often engage in sexual “bartering” for drugs, electronics, or other wants. The perception in Sunnyvale and Springfield is that girls willingly engage in sexual exchanges, while the law defines those under 18 as victims of sex trafficking. In Langley Falls, girls are also exchanging sexual acts for goods, but community workers perceive this differently than in Sunnyvale and Springfield. This exchange was more commonly referred to as, survival sex. Here, outed girls are forced to use their bodies to survive. They are groomed into sexual acts for food, shelter, and clothing. In Sunnyvale and Springfield, it was less common to know of girls exchanging sex as a means of fulfilling basic needs. While many shared stories of sex trafficking, most admitted that the cases go unreported. Community actors were asked why cases of sex trafficking and sexual assault are not brought forward. One community corrections worker felt no one wants to acknowledge the issues:

*I think they would ignore it, I think they ignore it. I mean, nobody wants to talk about it. We're very, mind your own business, and we're a very conservative town.*

According to these professionals, girls are forced to survive the sexual assault in the moment and deal with blaming afterwards:

*We're [judges] seeing a lot more of that, of kids coming here, kids being, 15, 16, 17 year old girls that are coming here and are being used for, for sex. A lot of people like to say, "Well, she's doing that for the money" you know. It doesn't matter what she's doing it for, she's a kid and it's not voluntary! So there's a lot of, "Well she's doing ..." you know, "She's a little whore, she's doing that for the money." No!*

Even communities attuned to noticing sex trafficking of young girls fail to understand the level of coercion, manipulation, and exertion of male dominance. One judge believed documented residents within pockets of her community would fear reporting:

*I think if it's in a community where they are undocumented folks, I'm positive they're just not going to [report sexual assault]. And I mean with the current administration, they're just not going to. Nor are they reporting it even if it's involving a child as a victim. I couldn't care less if they're undocumented. I really couldn't. I'd rather just help. Try to help the family. But, there's a lot of terror.*

Terror. Certain victims and families are scared to report sexual assaults due to fear of the government. They would rather suffer alone without justice, hoping to ensure their family can remain under one roof. With immigrant youth being detained and separated from their families at the U.S. southern border, this fear and terror is further instilled in the minds of undocumented citizens.

### **Langley Falls summary**

Langley Falls depicts urban county culture within Kansas. With a large populous and projected growth, knowing everyone's name is impossible. Langley Falls is growing, diversifying, and evolving. While demographics are changing, patriarchy is not. Patriarchy adapts alongside demographic and geographical changes. Langley Falls is wealthier than most of Kansas and large parts of the U.S. Wealth of white middle-class men is more deterministic of status than is family name or community ties—inconsistent with frontier and rural communities. In affluent communities, money buys more than goods. Wealth buys a reputation, inside or out of family inheritance.

Regardless of Kansas location, the church remains a common unifier. While services are more abundant in Langley Falls than in Sunnyvale or Springfield, community stakeholders report responsibility issues in obtaining services. For example, low-income girls must provide sibling daycare while lacking transportation to obtain services across the cityscape. Families still look to their church for counseling and overall professional help, if they are involved in the church. In all three clusters, gender norms influence a community's acknowledgement of poor and no-name girls. When girls respond to trauma through unhealthy behaviors (e.g., running away or using drugs), Kansas communities resort to punitive measures. Whether the guise is to keep at-risk girls safe or protect the public, communities are swift to use correctional involvement, which is almost never the answer. Girls have neglected community needs requiring local intervention, not incarceration.

Coercive sexual environments exist within the three community clusters, even though language and CSE maintenance varies. The mentality that sex trafficking does not exist in small-towns is prevalent throughout non-metropolitan Kansas; urban Kansas is on board with identifying sex trafficking, but not always in the most helpful way. Sunnyvale and Springfield workers categorize sexual exchanges with girls as willful bartering. In Langley Falls, stakeholders acknowledge underage sex exchanges such as sex trafficking, inappropriately criminalizing the acts. Sex trafficking as a label is trendy. Few are reporting incidents within communities, but in some urban locations, detained girls are screened. Screening is a step in the right direction, but it is a reactive tool not equipped to prevent the initial onset of abuse. Most of Kansas requires a broader ideological shift—a movement discouraging boys and men from owning girls and women. The movement begins with acceptance that close-knit and small-town jargon does not ensure inclusivity and safety for girls. With national support confronting and

calling out sexualized culture, now is the time for Kansas to prove that they are progressive, and care about all. Kansas can lead other rural states in the conquest of preventing, reducing, and responding to the needs of girls and women.

### **Discussion: The magical question**

*As far as communities, they need to be more open-minded and open-hearted. They need to stop being judgmental and be knowledgeable of their surroundings and what's going on with these kids and their home lives. If it's known that Joe Smith's parents have drug issues, well then maybe you don't need to keep an eye on Joe Smith because he's trouble. Maybe you need to keep an eye on him because he might be in trouble because of his parents. –Emerson Katson*

All participants were asked some version of the “magical question.” The magical question asked participants to identify the greatest need for teenage girls in their community. They were prompted to identify how they would target this need. For Emerson (26), help begins by recognizing underlying issues, being proactive and supportive rather than ignoring the issues or incorrectly pointing blame. Most community actors responded in a fashion similar to views of girls and women on all interview responses. Specific to teen girls, community corrections workers and a court service worker suggested positive mentoring for girls:

*I think I would work on opportunities for them with being mentored by successful women, so they could see a path forward for themselves.*

*Um, boy, if I could just put together a mentoring system, that I had a whole list of positive women that I could assign to be a surrogate parent almost to each person, so that they would always have somebody to talk to and to show them what's going on.*

*I would probably bring in some accomplished artists, actresses, and sports people, maybe a survivor, an abuse survivor. Some of those people that could speak to drawing on their inner strengths and their own resources and abilities to be successful. I'd probably have little pockets of those people, all over the city. And make it free to go to.*

For mentoring, some viewed this more as a process, while others sought value in periodically bringing in successful women to display agency, accomplishment, and value:

*I think having access to a mentor that is willing to come get the girls out and have some sort of crisis intervention where, if a parent's struggling with their kids right now they can contact their mentor and the mentor will come over and pick them up and separate the situation. Maybe they calm a volatile situation down.*

Some participants focused on the addition of community activities outside of the school and church setting:

*If I had all the money, I would get places here set up where kids could go and have activities that didn't cost any money, free movies, games and things that they could play. They'd be in a safe environment and not have to worry about anybody messing with 'em.*

The quote above came from a school personnel working with suspended youth in an alternative school building. After working as a uniformed police officer, then within the school system with troubled youth, he knew what girls needed. He shared stories about his daily role as a positive male authority figure for girls with a warped sense of trust in men. His idea of creating a “safe” place was in line with safety concerns of girls and women. They lack safe places where they can seek help and avoid abuse. Others, too, such as a frontier located defense attorney, recognized safety as a central need for teen girls:

*I think the teens there could really benefit from a safe space to be able to have somebody to talk to and express themselves but also have a space to go to where they're not being constantly monitored by people that can get them in trouble. The police presence is such in Staley County that they're always being watched if they are the type of kids that the police think is going to get in trouble. So, if they're from a good family or they're a good kid, they'll probably be left alone. But these kids that are from not such a good family, or they've been in trouble in the past, they never get a chance to be just a normal kid. So if they had a safe space that they could go and not be watched and not be reported, I think the community and the teens would really benefit from that.*

Safety, trust, and support. Community workers want such places for their youth. Rural stakeholders confirm traumatic experiences of young women while desiring similar resources. Girls and women supported the idea of mentoring and free locations to secure professional and peer support. If everyone is on board with this, why are there zero such places in Kansas? Rather



than providing what girls and community stakeholders recognize for community needs, patriarchy dominates frontier, rural, and urban domains, allowing emergence of coercive sexual environments. Patriarchy allows for the emergence in all locales but non-urban CSEs create somewhat distinct practices and routines. While the maintenance of CSEs varies from frontier and rural counties to urban locations, the result for many at-risk girls is the same—imprisonment. Imprisonment is experienced by outed girls within their hometowns, foster care placements, inpatient treatment facilities, and at times, behind cell bars. The many forms of imprisonment target girls lacking a family name and heavy community involvement. Their communities lack interest and ability to effectively intervene. A handful of community actors were attuned to larger “fixes” for sexualized culture and teen girl specific needs. These participants knew the underlying oppression of teen girls lied in the culture supporting their mistreatment through misogyny:

*I think that the most important thing that we should be doing right now that we aren't is talking to boys more about consent and about appropriate boundaries and behaviors, rather than telling girls how to avoid getting raped, rather than telling girls how not to dress, and to walk in groups and all of this other nonsense. I mean obviously that's helpful, but I really do think that in general as a **community**, even across the **state**, across the **nation**, we're really failing in talking to boys starting at a young age about appropriate boundaries and about what consent really is in a way that they can relate to.*

While some community stakeholders try to provide support where resources are absent, communities embedded in the patriarchal system, with few alternatives, often support and encourage oppression. As indicated in several instances, some community actors indicate hope that community environments can spark the initiative for change. As the court services officer stated (above), work begins at the community level, while also connected to state and national trends and policies. Her excerpt summarizes Chapter 5 and the key issues allowing trauma to become lived realities for girls and women. While community actors are aware of the influence

of various local factors, several were cognizant of the broader structural issues. These issues are not specific to one Kansas county, or Kansas as a whole; they are nationwide systemic issues. Broader cultural changes require invested commitment from community partners and willingness to invest significant ongoing time. It takes more than a one-time lecture on sexting for middle or high school aged kids. The kids' behaviors are less a problem than their local patriarchy supporting and encouraging the issues. Chapter 6 is devoted to a more thorough discussion on the implications for the current findings and policy suggestions.

## Chapter 6 - Conclusion

*Right in plain view from my chair was “April” written on the wall. “April” belonged to a set of mother’s handprints; next to this were tiny handprints belonging to her children. Symbolic coincidence? I’m not sure. –Field notes, December 11, 2017*

### Author’s preface

*My previous work as a clinical psychologist exposed me to the life of corrections and dealings with girls in the juvenile justice system. The work was challenging but rewarding. Fast forward three years later, working in academia. As I began the dissertation journey, I was unaware of where the path would take me, but I knew that I wanted to get myself back in the “field” and ignite some movement. As discussed in Chapter 4, on my first day back in the women’s prison, I observed handprints on the children’s visitation room walls. Upon first gaze, I recognized my own first name; next to the name were several small handprints. Likely a coincidence, having a common name, but I took it as a symbolic message. I knew I was doing the right work with a deserving yet vulnerable and underrepresented population of girls and women. I knew that my own privilege landed me on the “better” side of the table to an inmate, and damn it, I’m not here to waste it.*

*While larger media outlets focus on movements such as #metoo and #neveragain, Kansas youth still experience the trash-bag phase. The trash-bag phase is a loosely used term in the Kansas foster care system describing how foster youths’ possessions, their entire lives really, are packed in a black trash bag and moved from one placement to the next. All 12 of the incarcerated girls and three of the eight incarcerated women had been in at least one foster home. Collectively, the experiences were described as negative.*

*The following two sections provide a brief project review and summary of findings, with further discussion on coercive sexual environments within the heartland. The next section*

*outlines strategies for policy makers and community stakeholders in Kansas which, based on the current research, stand to significantly improve conditions and experiences for girls, especially those encountering coercive sexual environments in rural areas. Next, limitations of the study are stated, areas for future studies are offered, and broader implications for social issues facing the U.S. and its rural communities are discussed. The chapter ends with brief closing thoughts of this author.*

### **Project review**

Previously, all research on coercive sexual environments—place-specific conditions resulting in sexual exploitation of girls and young women—have been conducted only in urban areas. In response to that limitation, the current study applied tools and findings from previous CSE literature to assess conditions in frontier and rural locations in Kansas and explore possible CSE characteristics. The objective was to determine whether CSEs exist in non-urban areas, and if so, the impact on girls and women. Moreover, existing CSE literature has not addressed a trajectory in which CSEs may encourage deep involvement of girls in the juvenile justice system, and if so, characteristics of pathways from CSE to prison. Third, this study records perceptions from incarcerated girls and young women, comparing their lived experiences to reports from stakeholders in rural communities. Together with demographic and other data related to community characteristics, the study triangulates various perspectives and constructed realities regarding CSEs and their existence in frontier and rural communities.

To address the working questions (repeated below), 12 girls from the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex (KJCC) were solicited for in-depth interviews. To further examine links between juvenile and adult trajectories, eight adult women (under age 30) from the Topeka Correctional Facility (TCF) were interviewed. The semi-structured interview schedule was based

on a conceptual model including seven categories and 20 concepts. All incarcerated girls were included in the sample, while adult women were selected based on age and past experience in frontier/rural communities. Upon completion of prison interviews, 50 community stakeholders from ten Kansas counties were interviewed. Three Kansas counties were identified as frontier, four were rural, and three were urban. Urban counties were included for comparative purposes. Community actors working in community corrections and court services, along with K-State Extension Agents, were first interviewed. Using a snowballing technique, a variety of other professionals were targeted, including judges, school personnel, and law enforcement.

### **Non-urban CSEs exist and produce negative outcomes**

For reasons of population density, socio-political milieu, and over-incarceration rates of juveniles, Kansas provides an instructive case study of possible CSE characteristics in rural territory. Though results of this study are intricate, this section briefly reviews findings directly related to the four research questions. Further discussion follows.

*Question #1: Do coercive sexual environments exist within non-urban communities? If so, what is the effect on girls and young women?* The short answer is yes. Analysis focused on understanding characteristics of the coercive sexual environment phenomenon in non-urban communities. Results, based on findings from all groups, support the emergence and maintenance of CSEs in non-urban areas. The effect on certain girls and young women is complex and multifaceted. At-risk girls in frontier and rural CSEs quickly learn their place within the community structure. All girls, but especially those labeled as outsiders, feel a lack of acceptance from these small communities. Such exclusion results in a series of maladaptive coping mechanisms that are viewed as deviation from demands of the local gender regime. Such nonconformity from local ascribed behaviors results in further outing and negative attention.

## **CSEs carve three pathways, directing girls into the juvenile justice system**

*Question #2: Do coercive sexual environments encourage deep (incarceration)*

*involvement of girls into the juvenile justice system?* With respect to system involvement, Frontier and rural girls experience outcomes of CSEs much like their urban counterparts; they are often removed from the community and drawn into the criminal justice system. Thus, while certain differences are observed between urban and rural locations, population alone cannot fully explain the findings. However, unique characteristics and pathways are identified that distinguish the everyday maintenance of CSEs in rural areas.

Three specific pathways were identified as the common route into the criminal justice system for frontier and rural girls; I refer to them as a) no-name, low-name; b) doubt and distrust; and c) lack of social capital. First, girls who lack a strong family name in frontier and rural communities acquire a predetermined path into the criminal justice system. Second, outed girls lack a sense of trust and safety within their community. An ideology of idyllic traditional values (Mayberry-like), combined with a lack of intervention when girls are victimized, generates a lifestyle for at-risk girls that may include alcohol, drug use, running away, and truancy. Third, girls who engage in nonconventional gender norms (e.g., dressing provocatively, cursing) are ignored and/or shunned, resulting in a lack of social capital necessary to be deemed a community asset. This void increases the likelihood that they will be denied appropriate services or even acknowledgement of their needs. Frontier and rural communities often engage with these vulnerable girls only long enough to remove them from the community setting.

For the current sample, out-of-home placements ranged from zero to 29; the mean was 4.6. On average, girls and women have been placed in four out-of-home placements prior to incarceration. After being removed from the home and sight of the community, girls continue to

resort to unhealthy coping behaviors to deal with their trauma. Out-of-home placements almost result in negative outcomes and often propel girls deeper into the system, where many find themselves behind bars for minor offenses. While not all girls are affected equally, this general finding is common to girls from all locations, frontier, rural, and urban.

### **Indirect evidence confirms CSE connections to the adult criminal justice system**

*Question #3: Can we identify a pathway from coercive sexual environments into the juvenile justice system and, ultimately, involvement in the adult criminal justice system?*

Although this study is unable to confirm a direct path from the juvenile justice system into the adult system, CSE connections to the adult system remain apparent, and indirect evidence suggests a “revolving door” mechanism that propels at-risk girls from one placement to another. The unwanted and neglected girl from her community to maintain its reputation, an aspect of community life that may be especially prevalent in places with dense social ties. This outing process becomes a critical juncture in the pathway for girls into the juvenile justice system. Once in the system, it is extremely difficult for girls to escape the revolving door of prison. This assertion is supported by previous research, including a longitudinal study by Colman, Kim, Mitchell-Herzfeld, and Shady (2009), who found that incarcerated girls entered into the adult criminal justice system by their 28<sup>th</sup> birthday. From a study in New York, 81% of the sample were rearrested, 69% were convicted, and 34% were incarcerated as adults.

In the current study, two of the 12 interviewed girls were youthful offenders—a designation for a youth under the age of 18 but charged as an adult. At a minimum, the current sample can confirm this pathway for two interviewees. Further, interviewed adult women volunteered that their experiences in small town communities resulted in trauma, lack of safety, involvement in youth placements; they all confirmed that such trajectory led to their involvement

in the adult criminal justice system. A repeated concern for all participants was the community's lack of willingness to intervene and the lack of high-quality accessible services.

### **Rural stakeholders confirm traumatic experiences of young women**

*Question #4: Regarding community resources and practices, do perceptions differ between justice-involved girls and women, and that of community stakeholders?* Perceptions of community stakeholders were consistent with stories of girls and young women. With a total of 70 completed interviews, common threads emerged concerning lack of community resources, harmful practices, and an overall lack of support for at-risk girls. Participants in this study shared stories of abuse, neglect, and the silencing (and/or ignoring) of their needs; the implication is that outsider girls detract from community value. Virtually all community workers agreed with this sentiment. While some wanted to see their communities improve and provide fair support for all, they expressed surprisingly strong awareness of the unfair gendered dynamics within their frontier and rural communities.

### **Non-urban CSEs share urban origins but distinct maintenance**

A fifth major finding warrants emphasis; it involves structural mechanisms that reveal universal characteristics of CSEs and others that distinguish rural CSEs from urban attributes. After reviewing previous research, completing 70 interviews, and analyzing data from frontier, rural, and urban areas, it became evident that emergence of CSEs, regardless of geographic location or size, derives from patriarchy. Patriarchy as a system of power remains dynamic, sustainable, and produces an unfortunate bedrock for the foundation of CSE emergence. In addition, this study demonstrates that such conditions adapt to local culture. Girls and women everywhere experience ramifications of patriarchy. Many boys and men are allowed, at times encouraged, to oppress girls and women. In turn, at-risk girls adapt to a lifestyle where sexual



harassment and sexual assault are commonplace and normalized. Distinctions emerge, however, in ways that enable various locations to maintain the power imbalance and prey upon the most vulnerable.

Close-knit communities, such as those considered in this case study of Kansas, work hard to protect their own and to maintain the reigning ideology and status of the community at large. Boys and men are part of the in-group, exerting power within a sexualized culture over local girls. Boys can be rambunctious and sexual, even impregnating underage girls, all within a normalized hyper-masculine culture. Overall, girls are expected to adhere to strict gender norms associated with traditional views of being prim and proper. Although girls may perform manual labor on the farm, for example, a gendered hierarchy remains in which boys and boys' work is valued over all girls and their activities. Girls are singularly blamed for their pregnancies and sexual assaults. Poly-victimization was reported by most girls and women in this study, but virtually none of their abuses were addressed within the community. While girls and women in all communities experience patriarchy, certain distinctions exist in degree, routine, and options.

The maintenance of rural CSEs work uniquely regarding a host of factors. First, community population affords a quick proxy. Though not absolute, size-of-place can matter, as evidenced by the commonalities identified in the ten research sites. For example, family name, reputation, and generational standing—the ability to trace decades of family residency in the area—create a strong image of the ideal community citizen. Whereas urban areas are racially and culturally heterogeneous, these rural participants identified as mostly white and culturally homogeneous. Instead, intersections of name, socioeconomic status, and stability work to establish an “us versus them” culture in which outsiders are quickly labeled. In turn, the outsider status contributed to negative experiences of each interviewed participant. To offer a layer of

protection to its youths, rural parents must be actively involved within the school system, and youth should produce a talent that benefits the school/community and further solidifies family reputation. Without a secure level of community connection, lower-status families and “newcomers” are ousted and become hyper vulnerable to exploitation. For the girls and young women in this study, it meant getting caught up in workings of the criminal justice system.

In this study, the local milieu, the “social architecture” of rural life, builds on a foundation of dense social ties. Local norms and traditions vary significantly from metropolitan locations. All girls, but especially those labeled as outsiders, feel a lack of full acceptance from these small communities, which are known for dense connections and high collective efficacy. Literature, especially that focused on urban areas, proclaims that collective efficacy—the ability of a community to maintain control and an orderly environment—exerts positive results on community organization. In rural areas, the association is somewhat different, at least for these at-risk girls. Strong collective efficacy gathers close insider ties, but outsiders are defined quickly and deeply, primarily based on lack of deeply-rooted family name connections; being an ousted girl carries an additional weight of shame and blame. This critical distinction between expected outcomes of collective efficacy in differently sized and organized places calls for further attention.

Frontier and rural girls soon understand the social architecture of their rural communities, adjusting their behavior to navigate small-town norms. Even with outward attempts to assimilate, some girls are intentionally omitted from community life, yielding them to even greater risk. Stories from young women and community professionals indicate that gender norms are policed differently throughout the three clusters of communities. In Sunnyvale (frontier) and Springfield (rural), girls must act proper and conservatively while ignoring sexualized culture and

victimization; to one degree or another, boys and men are directly or indirectly encouraged or rewarded for sexualizing women's bodies. In Langley Falls (urban), sexualization still occurs, but options are greater, sub-groups are readily available, and added attention is given to certain urban cultural markers such as gang-involved attire.

All communities nurture a gendered double standard, one that upholds local versions of hegemonic masculinity. When boys act out, they verify the reigning power of masculinity; when girls deviate from assigned gender norms, the power of masculinity is threatened, and the “appropriate” version of femininity is undermined. Though the power dichotomy by sex is universal, forms and adaptations are dependent on the local gender regime. Because power is attached to masculinity and submission to emphasized femininity, girls are caught in a double-bind, or “catch-22,” pressing young women toward futile options that often end in a downward spiral.

In turn, girls become conditioned to accept their primary community value—to fill a subordinate role and use their bodies for sexual purposes. Girls must learn to internalize their own behaviors and appearances to align with prescribed patriarchal views, which comes at great personal cost; the sexual demands and lack of protection makes the danger especially true for at-risk girls. Given recollections and stories shared, girls and young women are only indirectly aware of their common plight with others; they may glimpse but lack a group consciousness, failing to understand their common plight with other young women. However, after being removed from their communities, many of these young participants were able to process ways in which they were discouraged or denied agency and access to positive outlets. Their words were often lacking and halting, but a common theme emerged: the cost of rural patriarchy is a loss of autonomy, character, and overall well-being.

Girls and young women must alter their daily lives to achieve the most urgent of all human needs, acceptance. Eventually, characteristics of the local CSE change who they are. It becomes a matter of survival; they relinquish parts of their self to be perceived of any value, even if worth lies in their sexualization. These young women must navigate a patriarchal system, specific to the organization of rural life, which requires them to know when to work hard and when to be submissive. Most of all, they learn to keep quiet about assault. In frontier and rural communities, family reputation blocks the reporting of sexual assault in almost any situation, but girls without community ties additionally understand that they will be blamed and further outed. On the other hand, in urban communities, family wealth is more important than family name. Wealth buys inclusion.

In summary, dirt road pathways take on a character distinct from urban streets. After completion of 50 community interviews, it became clear that gendered rural courses to the deep end of the system begin with one of three paths: no-name, low-name; doubt and distrust; and lack of local capital. It is obvious that lack of a “good” family name and reputation in frontier and rural communities sets girls up for a life of hardship. A last name, one word, can change one’s entire life. Second, both young participants and community stakeholders identified that rejected girls do not feel safe in their rural communities. Even within locales described as close-knit, girls experience poly-victimization at the hands of “trusted” community members. Lastly, a lack of community interest in helping no-name girls, coupled with nonexistent or sparse community resources, fast-tracks a path for [certain] girls into prison. Community workers are fully aware of fragments and pitfalls along the way, but they lack community support for change. Eventually, they adapt or leave. Such systematic oppression does not happen in one day; but its sustenance requires constant vigilance by respected community members (Cohen, 2012).

Awareness that patriarchy organizes differently across place and time requires further examination. This study has observed some of those attributes in frontier and rural places. Intersectionality in rural areas, based on low SES, poor family name, and “female” assigned gender, identify those who will be outed. Young women come to terms with their sexualized value, repeated victimization, and overall disregard for their well-being. Avenues of success for at-risk girls are virtually non-existent, and they often do not recognize their own potential, providing feedback loops into a system of oppression.

The current study identifies at least three fault-lines in rural gender regimes, fissures that may provide a sliver of light and potential for positive change. First, most community professionals are gravely aware of the severe disadvantage of at-risk girls within their communities. On an individual level, they exert daily effort to work around and within this unfair dynamic. Second, both schools and churches represent active and well-respected organizations in the community. They represent institutions where education and training can take place—they can serve as powerful community resources for all, and especially for outed girls and their families. Lastly, juvenile services in Kansas is working hard to provide state initiatives for positive change. Grant money is available for agencies working within an evidence-based model with community planning. With research supporting gender responsive approaches, now is the time for Kansans to secure the money they need to implement much needed community change.

### **Policy matters**

*“It is long past time to choose a different path, one that aligns the moral, ethical, and human imperative with fiscal prudence, safer communities, and better youth outcomes.” -McCarthy, Schiraldi, & Shark, 2016, p. 17*

Incarceration, specifically youth incarceration, is a grossly ineffective policy. Consistent with the views of Left Realism, crime disproportionately affects working class people while the

policies serve to make crime worse (Currie, 2010; Lea, 2014). During the 1980s and 1990s, when a general get-tough-on-crime ideology targeted low-risk drug-offending adults, rising incarceration rates were also observed within the juvenile system; in turn, increases in juvenile incarceration feed into adult mass incarceration (Rodriguez, 2013). For girls specifically, entrance into the juvenile justice system often predisposes them into the adult criminal justice system (Barry, 1995; Peak, 2015; Rodriguez, 2013; Sickmund, 2004).

Even though Kansas has a youth crime rate lower than the national average, the state ranks fifth in the nation for youth confinement. A 2014 cost study of the Kansas juvenile system reported a \$100,000 bill to retain a juvenile for one year (Cost Study, 2015). Most youth, especially girls, do not pose a threat to community safety. Over the past two years, Kansas has promised to make it more difficult to place youth behind bars while also offering community-level services. As of December 2017, one-third of incarcerated girls remained in prison for cutting off electronic monitoring devices. Even among urban counties in this study, all but one urban county directly stated that they have yet to see any money given back to communities to help alleviate the myriad of community-based program closings; yet, SB 367 had promised \$8,000,000 to be transferred for community-based services (Christie & Bowman, 2016). Rather than a direct “transfer” to communities, agencies must apply for grant funding to receive money. Given the current state of juvenile corrections in Kansas, a starting place for policy recommendation begins at the community level. Kansas health care agencies need to provide funding for community-based programs—not just within the most populated of areas, but with accessible access for all Kansans. Community programs such as Functional Family Therapy and Multisystemic Therapy (MST) represent prevention programs found to be effective in both cost and crime reduction (Lee et al., 2012). The annual cost per participant is \$8,000 for MST and

\$5,000 for Functional Family Therapy (Weber & Arrigona, 2015). While this approach is applied after girls have been identified, it is a step in the right direction—towards an approach of reducing the negative impact of detaining girls. According to Currie (2010), programs should expand on the “what works” literature, a focus on reducing victimization and fear, and communication with others on anti-poverty and employment strategies (Currie, 2010). It all starts with follow through, culturally and structurally.

Aside from enormous costs, incarceration exerts lifelong negative effects on children. Over the past few years, Kansas juvenile reformers have made some strides toward reducing youth incarceration. However, outside agencies have reviewed Kansas juvenile corrections and acknowledged gender differences, yet the state has neglected a developmental reform for each point in the system specific to girls. Again, this is a system adjustment rather than a prevention mechanism. While the ultimate goal should be decarceration and prevention, certain stop-gap measures can alleviate some of the current problems, shifting toward a gender responsive approach. Sherman and Balck (2015) recommend three general steps to accomplish a gender-responsive system. First, Kansas should gather and analyze separate data on boys and girls. Second, Kansas should examine decision making at each point throughout the system, separately scrutinizing statutes and policies that affect lives of boys and girls, separately. Third, Kansans must imagine change. One imagined outcome should be a system tailored for girls—one focused on community-based services and culturally responsive trauma-informed programming, conferring agency and social support for girls (Sherman & Balck, 2015).

Failure to adhere to a development approach for juvenile justice-involved girls results in short-term and long-term consequences. Although juvenile policy restricts the use of detainment for status-offending youth, this action still occurs. While girls may have agency in some life

decisions, many girls in Kansas are being detained for running away, with the crime recorded as “Interference with Law Enforcement.” Girls are running away because of trauma. They need services and they receive incarceration. While some agency is afforded to every individual, choices for these girls has been severely curtailed. At-risk girls may have choices to flee or avoid harmful situations, but the outcome of their assertiveness is generally not received well by their community. Many have been victimized but are treated solely as offenders. Arresting girls for their own abuse remains ineffective, but also cruel and unusual. While laws are in place against detaining status-offending youth, it still happens. Policies and programs should empower girls to report and coordinate efforts with law enforcement.

Numerous opportunities lie in wait within communities that care, urban or rural, which can effect positive change for its young women. This modest study cannot address all viable solutions; it does provide avenues for cultural and structural change. When possible, girls’ behaviors should be handled within the child welfare system, not the juvenile justice system. For example, mandatory arrests for domestic violence (a Kansas policy) may mean that girls are punished for living in their chaotic and violent homes, responding to their surroundings. The state has the authority to require training for law enforcement to recognize needs of girls and their responses to trauma; such training becomes crucial to changing how their circumstances are handled.

When girls are sexually exploited, they should be treated as victims, not as prostitutes. Their own victimization, as well as status offending behaviors, should never lead to detainment. While federal guidelines prohibit such conditions, it still happens in Kansas (and in other states). Attorneys, judges, and community corrections/court services workers must have trauma-informed care training to improve court culture for girls. The Kansas Department of Corrections



offers grant initiatives for community agencies, and health-related money can also be considered when implementing evidence-based practices and programs related to victimization. Access to such resources requires local leaders to step up to the plate.

Assisting outed girls should not begin after the community fails; proactive steps are also required. As addressed within the *magical question* section, young participants in this study, as well as community stakeholders, agree on several major needs for girls everywhere, but especially within rural architecture. One suggestion that arose during data collection envisioned crisis centers that would allow girls a safe place to collect themselves, offering family remediation services. Others saw value in a safe and fun atmosphere, places where disadvantaged or troubled girls (who often cannot participate in or are excluded from school-related activities) could go. In these small communities, outside of school and church, few options exist. In most parts of Kansas, this means adhering to a very specific form of Christian faith, and not all churches are welcoming to outsiders. However, herein lies an opportunity for church-involved patrons to educate themselves on effective responses to the needs of families and at-risk girls.

Common to all communities, the school system is the most obvious start for community education. Current and previous findings underscore the importance of addressing risks and providing support during early childhood to mitigate impacts of exposure to violence. DeHart and Moran (2015) suggest embedding such efforts within school-based programming as well as after-school programs. Across all interviews, schools were referenced 1,963 times, reflecting consensus on the prominence of school systems in reaching youth. Yet, most schools seriously lack resources, and the state continues to slash their budgets. Some schools seem too concerned

with policing dress codes and preparing reputation-worthy kids for college, rendering them neglectful in providing much needed services to kids:

*But sometimes the plate is so full of the staff members that do have the experience to work with those situations that it gets dropped, and unfortunately at the hands of those kiddos. And I do know that they had an at-risk staff member but when money gets cut that money gets taken away from staffing at-risk staff members.*

Money is often cut from positions that benefit minority outed youth to better serve those already privileged. Schools, medical professionals, and other practitioners sorely need education on early screening tools such as the ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences). Early identification of needs results in prevention for girls. No formal training is required for the ACEs tool, and it is free. Raising awareness of maladaptive coping mechanisms such as substance abuse and running away holds strong potential to benefit those with the most exposure to trauma (DeHart & Moran, 2015). Professionals deserve to be able to respond appropriately to such situations.

### **Heartland strong**

Most Kansans mean well. They want to preserve a sense of small-town pride. Boys grow up to take over the family farm. They marry their high school sweetheart who births four children and stays at home to provide childcare and domestic labor. Following some national trends concerning rural areas, political ideals in Kansas have shifted from social and economic equality to cultural issues targeting conversations such as abortion and gay marriage. In 2018, the Kansas Legislature approved a bill allowing faith-based adoption agencies to deny gay and lesbian couples based on religious beliefs (Simpson, 2018). The heartland of America is slow to discard outdated practices and adopt proactive changes that may be apparent in coastal regions of the United States; a part of the slow-paced evolution stems from community cultures that resist progress. While many forms of rural patriarchy demand retention of dated values and harmful

practices, interviews with many of the professionals in Kansas communities also indicate a willingness to change.

Several authors have tackled contradictions and adversities in rural areas, and Kansas often crops up as a case study. Frank's (2004) writing on Kansas is among a handful of others. Frank noticed that Kansans are willing to vote against their best interests on economics, for example, if they feel they are protecting cultural values that stand in opposition to the Democratic party. More than a decade earlier, Frank and Deborah Popper, East coast scholars who spent time traveling around rural areas in the Midwest, wrote *Buffalo Commons*. A controversial book, it advocated pulling private lenders and government out of small struggling communities. According to these authors, such moves would allow terrains, like those found in Kansas, to go back to open land and free roaming buffalo. Most rural Kansans, committed to their close-knit communities, were not impressed (Matthews, 1990). In many ways, Kansas wins; many of its small communities remain inhabited, mostly with pride and culture intact. However, stories of young women revealed in this study underscore the need for transformation. While stories revealed here are specific to lives in Kansas, this state is not an anomaly. This study, together with the work of Popkin and colleagues, suggests that girls everywhere experience patriarchy in ways that are deleterious to their development. It now appears that close-knit communities who look out for their own, and citizens who ignore girls' pleas for help, add another layer of burden for at-risk girls. Caring about Kansas girls means caring about all girls.

What is the face of its future? Rural Kansas populations are dwindling more quickly than most parts of the U.S. (Hunt & Panas, 2018). Community stakeholders are grasping for ways to draw community kids back after college completion; but homegrown youth are leaving rural

Kansas, often eager for exposure to new cultures, open to diversity and change. With time, hopefully rural communities will welcome their innovative ideas.

Kansas will not be taken over by buffalo. According to Kotkin (2010), by 2050, when the American population reaches 400 million, less urbanized areas will increase. Predictions of population change are diverse and varying. What remains consistently urgent is how girls and women are provided appropriate resources and opportunities across Kansas, the U.S., and the globe.

### **Beyond the heartland**

The hard, often grueling work of feminism remains critical. It is important in Kansas just as much as other locations. While frontier and rural Kansas struggle to accept and help no-name girls, at this writing the U.S. government, and pockets of its citizens, supports the abuse and imprisonment of migrant children. At a time when white middle-class men in political power intentionally inflict harm upon innocent children, citizens supporting fair treatment of all kids must come together. A budding movement speaks for innocent migrant children as well as for victimized girls in rural Kansas. They are connected through power and its abuses. Extension of current findings and conclusions should be considered in a larger realm. While findings of this study cannot be statistically generalized to place-specific locations, it is such meaningful feminist work that allows for continued expansion of its efforts. Much work remains. Underlying mechanisms such as patriarchy shift over place, space, and time. The current findings are decisive, but ongoing work and continued interest in lives of girls and women is its mandate.

During President Obama's reign in the White House, the administration put forth a campaign known as My Brother's Keeper initiative. My Brother's Keeper initiative was created to focus on urgent problems facing boys and young men of color. The National Crittenton was

created to see equal policy attention on girls and young women. The Crittenton agency works with girls and young women who are marginalized by the many institutions in their lives. Utilizing a trauma-informed approach, the agency acknowledges that many girls and young women have suffered previous trauma (e.g. physical and sexual abuse) and underscores their urgent need for services (Popkin et al., 2015). Such services can be available anywhere, through technical assistance, training, organizational assessments, a peer-to-peer network, and more. Connecting Kansans with The National Crittenton, or similar foundations, can significantly improve quality of services in Kansas.

Quality community-based programs are designed to alleviate fiscal responsibility of housing low-risk girls in prisons. They would also allow girls to involve themselves with national movements such as #metoo, It's on Us, Time's Up, and dozens of other activist-based movements; that is virtually impossible while young women are locked behind secluded prison walls. Given no other means, young people often turn to culture. As one example, Lady Gaga's lyrics, *Til it happens to you*, points to the urgency of helping girls and women seek professional support. Survivors need more than to be hushed:

*You tell me it gets better, it gets better in time  
You say I'll pull myself together, pull it together  
You'll be fine  
Tell me what the hell do you know  
What do you know  
Tell me how the hell could you know  
How could you know*

The girls and women who “know” are generally silenced. For the girls and women in this study, they believe that their voices are heard only through their shared prison interviews. That must change. In a perfect scenario, broader sexualized culture would shift away from permitting boys and men to assault girls and women. While the current study sought to further understand

place specific culture related to at-risk girls and sexual violence, according to Wallstrom (2018), “sexual violence is not culture; it is criminal.” The labeling of sexual violence as cultural, provides an excuse and justification for the behavior (Wallstrom, 2018). This criminal behavior presents differently across time and place. While research shows that values and traditions in frontier and rural communities are more static, ideological movement is possible. Movement away from patriarchal values oppressing girls and women, coupled with diminished power of the good ole’ boys system in frontier and rural communities, means better outcomes for girls and women. The cultural shift begins with educating boys about healthy relationships (UN Women). As one exemplar, Jana’s Campaign, a grassroots non-profit organization founded in Kansas, seeks to provide quality educational programming that teaches gender and relationship violence prevention. They provide prevention strategies and curricula presented through secondary schools, colleges, and universities, as well as within community-based organizations and agencies. They have trained facilitators to engage boys and men in a conversation about reducing gender violence (Jana’s Campaign). Communities must be willing to embrace it.

Jana’s Campaign is one of thousands of agencies providing educational presentations and resources to Kansas communities and others nationwide. The tools are out there; often the impetus lies in one person’s call to action. However, careful program selection is essential. While free self-defense workshops are rooted in prevention of sexual assaults, they place focus on potential victims as responsible for their own assault. Other programs suggest skill building for traumatized girls to develop healthy coping mechanisms (DeHart & Moran, 2015). While important for addressing effects of trauma, such programs often represent a reactive approach to a deeper issue requiring proactive prevention and culture change. One effective effort, titled Sexual Assault Prevention and Education Center, is sponsored by the University of Kansas. The

initiative, coupled with teaching healthy sexual culture, cultivates bystander intervention programs, which have been effective in preventing violence. The Center educates youth on assorted options for acting when someone is at risk for victimization (The University of Kansas). These resources are available. Acknowledging a close-knit yet less-than-perfect community is a critical first step toward cultural change.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study are significant and suggest correctives for future scholars. First, while 50 community interviews provide rich data, the professional categories for community stakeholders were unbalanced. Most participants worked in the field of corrections, the courts, and law enforcement. Interviews from a wider variety of professionals could provide unique insights into the issues explicated here. For example, urban judges were quite knowledgeable about systemic issues compared to frontier and rural judges. Treatment providers, specifically those working in sexual assault and domestic violence agencies, may provide additional perspectives. School personnel, often “first-responders,” can offer valuable insight. Analyzing findings based on professional role could provide suggestions tailored to agencies working with youth.

Second, while previous CSE studies have focused on urban domains, the current study augments existing literature by documenting the presence and maintenance of CSEs in frontier and rural locations. However, many other place-specific locations warrant further investigation. Additionally, concepts such as place-specific gender regimes are measured and analyzed from the perceptions of participants; differences across time and space may look somewhat different. For example, no one has assessed tribal communities or those that have endured long-term conflict such as parts of the Middle East. Other locations of interest include college campuses

and military bases—sites known for higher levels of social organization and collective efficacy. Another consideration is the study of sexualized environments within the prison system, addressing a population with diminished voice, residing in an environment with clear power lines drawn between staff and inmates. The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) provides a required set of policies and procedures that work to educate, prevent, and respond to sexual assault within correctional facilities, but assaults still occur (Blessinger, 2015).

Third, one working question focused on the pathway from CSEs to the juvenile and adult justice systems. This research was not able to fully answer that issue. Future studies should consider longitudinal data to better understand consequences of CSEs and equally powerful protective factors, further unfolding the pathway for linkages from the juvenile to adult system. Two of the interviewed girls were classified as youthful offenders, a designation for a youth under the age of 18 but charged as an adult; what mechanisms work toward this outcome? In Kansas, recent legislative changes proposed that such youth spend their incarceration within a juvenile correctional facility until the night of their eighteenth birthday at which time they are transferred to an adult prison on the eve of their eighteenth birthday. They experience a strip search, checking in of belongings, medical and mental health screening, allocation of state issued property, and then are shuffled through an unknown prison, with unfamiliar faces, with what can only be an immense degree of fear and uncertainty.

Fourth, as with most qualitative research, the data collected in this study are rich, extensive, and detailed. The current study included 70 interviews, with 1,486 recorded minutes with inmates and an additional 2,511 minutes with community actors; the total amounts to 67 hours of recorded data. The volume of data is immense, its nature intense. Several main findings are represented in the current results but are not all-inclusive. Interpretation of the data can and



will extend further. For example, the interview schedule asked girls and women to identify their sexual orientation as well as gender identity. The purpose was to provide more accurate depictions of hypothetical examples while also further understanding how communities responded to deviation from mainstream sexual orientation and gender identities. Results thus far have not addressed the LGBTQ population, a group exhibits higher rates of abuse and homeliness (Sherman & Balck 2015) and that doubtless faces exclusion and trauma (Dank et al. 2015), becoming targets of violence and sexual victimization (Belknap, Holsinger, & Little, 2012). Copious other issues related to young women's challenges and dealings with coercive environments remain; this is only the beginning. But it is a journey worthy of our best work.

Lastly, the theoretical foundation for the study centered on a feminist criminology perspective with gendered pathways and ecological systems theory. I am satisfied that the combination has served well in directing a conflict-based, feminist framework focused on gendered structures and power dynamics in non-urban areas. Other scholars may take other directions, including additional theoretical considerations and a revised conceptual model. To provide a few examples, added focus on Becker's (1963) work on *Outsiders* as well as Simmel's scholarship on *The Strangers* could help further explicate the findings on family name and outed experiences. Additionally, many participants spoke about being labeled as deviant, outsiders, and other negative references. Becker's (1963) labeling theory provides a sociological framework for determining how self-identity and behavior is determined, at times influenced, by the terms used to describe them. Much like the girls' status offending and maladaptive behaviors, labeling theory holds that deviance is not an inherent act but a product of being seen and labeled as a deviant against standard norms (Becker, 1963). Similarly, Lemert's (1951) secondary deviance suggests that deviance is a process—one that is embedded within the conceptualization of self

and is likely to be considered as criminal within the local social context. One must take care in theoretical over-reach when attempting to integrate theories that emanate from very different, and conflicting, assumptions; consensus-based theories start from a very different position than the current study. Yet, the study of coercive sexual environments seems wide open for consideration of additional perspectives.

### **Author's closing thoughts**

*Another head hangs lowly  
Child is slowly taken  
And the violence caused such silence  
Who are we mistaking?  
But, you see it's not me  
It's not my family  
In your head, in your head  
They are fighting...*

*Another mother's breaking  
Heart is taking over  
When the violence causes silence  
We must be mistaken  
It's the same old thing since 1916  
In your head, in your head  
They're still fighting...*

*The song lyrics above come from the song, *Zombie*, done by the rock group, *Bad Wolves*—a cover of the *Cranberries*' 1994 version. The 1994 version was released years after an *Irish Republican Army (IRA)* set off bombs killing two young children and wounding 50 others. After release of the song, the *IRA* declared a ceasefire after 25 years of conflict. Some speculate that the *Cranberries*' song led to the truce. The new cover honors change but acknowledges the daily fight for humanity (Carter, 2018). Artists willing to draw attention to an ugly unresolved issue credit a song with promoting peace and change. If one small group, and one song, can generate change, what is everyone waiting on?*

*It is a fallacy to believe that no girls will be incarcerated. In the meantime, recognizing that girls and women have unique needs means gender-specific treatment. Six women at TCF participated in services and felt the groups made lasting impressions for change. Girls at KJCC indicated that they only had one person they felt supported them—their corrections counselor. As a previous psychologist at KJCC, I was interested in their relationship with their psychologist. Some appreciated the counseling, while others referred to her as a “bitch” or “smartass.” Their only other choice is to deal their troubles on their own. Again, most workers want to do good work; the underlying concern is that corrections counselors do not have backgrounds in dealing with treatment needs specific to trauma-informed care or mental health. It is concerning that the girls have access to only **one** mental health provider. In a community setting (at least in urban areas) options are available. Not here, not where needs are extreme. Requesting a different psychologist would be met with the mentality, “If you don’t like it, don’t come to prison.” Most of these girls do not belong in prison. A patriarchal system places them in prison and then fails to address responsivity issues related to services, another disservice to those most in need.*

*While Juvenile Services in Kansas works to reduce rates of incarceration, there remains a disconnect between different entities. One worker shared a story about one of the girls I interviewed. The girl was about to release home until the community corrections worker reminded everyone of the pending physical abuse allegation within the home. A community stakeholder revealed that she knew of one, possibly two, placements in the entire state willing to take girls involved with both DCF and the KDOC. The court’s decision was to drop the pending DCF charge to allow the girl to release home. Drop an investigation that could retraumatize this girl, subject her to further abuse, and give her the message that her safety is not of utmost importance—convenience of others is. In yet a second situation, one youth was asked about her*

*aftercare plans. She had the following to say about her plans, “I was told I can go to independent living. But, I don’t know about going to independent living. I had sexual trauma there.” Documented histories of sexual abuse within placements, and still, girls are being placed within these same sexualized environments. The underlying reason, again, was convenience. It would require more time and effort to find Joleen a safe placement. In a third and final case, Kristy, the girl with a significant history of drug addiction, truancy, running away from home, physical and sexual abuse, and coercion into sexual trafficking—all within her hometown community—was a direct release. Kristy was free to leave the facility with no aftercare plans in place. Open door, exits Kristy. No help. No support. No plans. Back to the same unhealthy environment.*

*Many Kansas workers are in the field for the right reasons; they want to help Kansas youth. As in any field, some involved parties are not involved for the right reasons, or, they may be uneducated about what works to help girls and women. Lack of understanding is not an excuse for traumatizing girls. It is time that Kansans pull together, provide ongoing education, and support one another in doing what is right, not what is convenient, for young women in Kansas. The inmate interviews are not just about Kansas girls and women; they represent stories of thousands of others. Girls and women everywhere deserve better.*

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# Appendix A - Interview schedule-KJCC

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE-KJCC

### Sexualized environments: Criminal justice involved girls in the heartland

#### Introduction and Basic Demographics

*After going over the informed consent document and securing signatures, the researcher will spend some time further explaining the goals of the project, sharing background information, and gathering basic demographic information from the participant, including full **name, age, race/ethnicity, place of birth and childhood information, date of entry into the Kansas correctional system, length of sentence, and expected release.** Identifying information will be stored separately, connected with a project ID #, in a secure, password-protected environment available only to the PI and the PhD candidate.*

**Let me start by telling you a bit about me and this project. My name is April Terry and I am a graduate student at Kansas State University. As part of my program, I get to talk with girls/women at KJCC and TCF about their childhood experiences. I want to help the state of Kansas better understand what happens within communities that may influence entrance into the justice system. Your willingness to talk with me could lead to Kansas making changes to help prevent youth from entering into the justice system.**

**Now, I'd like to learn a bit about you. Can you tell me a little about where you're from?**

**NOTE:** The aim is to elicit open conversation from the participants without leading suggestions. The overall tone is expected to be friendly and conversational, and to encourage the participants to engage as the experts in this situation. Probes are provided simply to guide the interviewer toward the concepts indicated in the proposal and may not be used verbatim.

#### Community Infrastructure

*The bulk of literature on life-course and place-level studies has been analyzed using male participants in urban areas. This section will allow for girls, primarily from non-urban places, to share their voices regarding their community climate. We hope to elicit ideas associated with life course perspectives (e.g. **collective efficacy**) and community structure (e.g. **organizations**). We also hope to discuss gender dynamics (e.g. **ruling apparatus and opportunity structures connected to gendering**) specific to their community.*

**A1: How would you describe your neighborhood/community to an “outsider” – someone who has never been to your community?**

Probe: What sorts of activities are/were available in your community (e.g. churches, organizations, clubs)?

Probe: What kinds of things are kids encouraged to do?

Probe: How are teens, in general, viewed in your town? (Boys? Girls?)

Probe: In your community, are certain family names known as either more or less deserving of police attention?

Probe: Is there a difference in how people are treated between newcomers and families that have been here for generations?

**A2: What kinds of jobs and other activities are available for teens in your community?**

Probe: Do boys and girls work similar jobs?

Probe: How would your life be different if you were a boy?

**A3: How does your community respond when behaviors of teens are frowned upon?**

Probe: Can you give me an example of a time when you felt you were being watched, or corrected?

Probe: What about a time when you felt like you were a valued member of the community?

**Local Gender Regime**

*This section addresses how the participant views the local **gender regime** with a particular interest in the awareness and description of **hegemonic masculinity**. Studies have shown that multiple social **institutions** respond differently to girls' and boys' behavior. For example, sexual harassment in schools flourish due to school climate (e.g. allowing inappropriate language and behavior) which negatively affects girls more than boys (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). This section hopes to elicit discussion on the local **culture** and how individuals or groups may treat girls' behavior differently when compared to their male counterparts.*

**B1: What kinds of work and positions of leadership do men hold in your community?**

Probe: Women? What about at school? Who are the role models?

Probe: If your community's Facebook page ran a story about the most valuable community member, who would that be and why?

**B2: How do kids at your school interact?**

Probe: What about exclusive groups or "cliques" in your school?

Probe: What about dating: what is expected?

Probe: What other activities do kids do around there?

**B3: What are typical behaviors that would get girls/boys in trouble in your community?**

Probe: What happens when boys get in trouble? Girls?

Probe: How do the police and other authorities react? Parents? The school?

**Coercive Sexual Environments**

*This section addresses the heart of the current research, and the researcher will spend some time eliciting information from the participant about their community's ideology towards **sexualized norms** and **gendered violence**. Included will be an exploration of their experiences with*

*exposure to sexual violence/coercion. An attempt will be made to better understand how community ideology and/or exposure to sexual violence/coercion provides a pipeline from victimization to prison. For many juvenile justice involved female youth, the involvement in offending behavior is usually a cover-up from other serious problems experienced by the girl (Saar et al., 2015). These girls then enter into the juvenile justice system even though they generally pose little to no threat to public safety (Puzzanchera, 2014). In most cases, this is a product of **gendered social control**.*

**I'm going to ask you a series of questions about your community and how the community handles sexual behaviors. It helps me to know how you would describe your sexual preference.**

Using the following line, where do you see yourself:

Straight----- gay

**C1: Imagine that a girl and guy are dating, or, “seeing each other.” The girl’s parents aren’t home so she invites her boyfriend over. They decide to have sex. Word gets around. What reactions would you expect?**

Probe: What do the girl’s parents think when they find out? What do the boy’s parents think when they find out?

Probe: What are other students at school saying about the girl? About the boy? What would most teachers say? Would law enforcement ever be involved?

**C1b: Imagine the same initial scene. A girl and boy are dating, or, “seeing each other.” The boy comes over to the girl’s home. The boy tries to pressure her into having sex but she pushes him off repeatedly and tells him that she doesn’t want to. The girl tells her friends what happened. What do they say? The boy tells his friends, what do they say? Did anything illegal happen here? Unethical?**

**C2: When a girl in your community engages in sexual activity of any kind, what happens? How is she treated by others? Other girls? Boys? Adults?**

Probe: What names is she called?

Probe: What one word would be used to describe a girl who is known to have sex? Why *this* one word?

Probe: If I asked a random set of ten students in your school what number would be a lot of sexual partners for a girl, what would I hear?

Probe: Would that one word change for the girl who has had \_\_\_\_\_ number of partners? What would the word be?

**C2b: Similarly, what happens when a boy engages in sexual activity of any kind? How is he treated by others? Other boys? Girls? Adults?**

Probe: What names would he be called?

Probe: What one word would be used to describe a boy who has sex? Why *this* one word?

Probe: If I asked a random set of ten students in your school what number would be a lot of sexual partners for a boy, what would I hear?

Probe: Would that one word change for the boy who has had \_\_\_\_\_ number of partners? What would the word be?

**C3: If a girl in your school were to tell someone that she was sexually assaulted, how would people react? Describe the girl who is most likely to be believed. Least likely to be believed? What would the response be if a girl was assaulted by another girl?**

Probe: Which girls are most likely to be believed by other girls? By male peers? By adults?

Probe: Picture a girl who has reported a sexual assault, say last year. Now picture the same girl disclosing another sexual assault. Does this change whether or not she is believed?

Probe: Tell me about your own personal experiences with sexual assault.

Probe: Overall, what percentage of girls your age do you think have been sexually assaulted?

Probe: Does sexual orientation matter?

**C4: What places or groups in your community are known for allowing or even encouraging sexual activity?**

Probe: What percentage of girls your age do you think have been sexually assaulted?

Probe: Where does this usually occur? By whom (e.g. friend, family member)?

**C5: I hear that sometimes girls your age trade sexual acts for favors or things they want. How often have you heard of this happening in your community?**

Probe: What favor or item is most likely to be traded? Are there other avenues for girls to obtain these desired favors/items?

Probe: Are there certain groups or cliques of girls who are more likely to trade sexual acts for favors or items? How does this happen?

Probe: What about boys? Are you aware of boys who trade sexual acts for favors or things? If so, what are they usually trading for?

**C6: Tell me about any times you've experienced an unwanted sexual comment, gesture, or joke in any form.**

Probe: What are some common sexual rumors that surface around your school? Who starts them? How do people know about the rumors, and what do kids do about the rumors?

Probe: What are some common unwanted sexual texts that are received? Who sends them? Who receives them?

Probe: If I randomly selected ten girls from your school, how many would say they have been the victim of negative sexual rumors?

## Gendered Experiences

Since West and Zimmerman's (1987) work on "**doing gender**" was introduced thirty years ago, scholars have continued attempting to explain the process of gendered social interactions. Doing gender sometimes means owning up to socially prescribed gender norms and engaging in expected gendered behavior. Other times, it may include actions of resistance to gender norms. **Group consciousness refers to the awareness of commonalities and shared histories** of girls and women, based on their power and position in society. The most obvious way to measure this is to look at ways in which the local community encourages or discourages girls and their goals. We look for ways in which girls and women access and practice **agency** in such environments, as well as vulnerability to multiple forms of abuse (Blessinger, 2015). **Poly-victimization refers to a constellation of ways in which girls and women are often victimized, establishing what has been shown to serve as a pipeline for girls and women into the criminal justice system** (Smith, Leve, & Chamberlain, 2006; Sherman & Balck, 2015).

### **D1: In your community, what does it mean to, "act like a girl?" What does it mean to, "act like a boy?"**

Probe: For you specifically, where do you see yourself on the following line:

Very feminine-----Very masculine

Probe: What happens when a girl deviates from the standards you gave for "acting like a girl?" What about if a boy deviates?

Probe: What are some things that girls can get away with that may not be considered, "acting like a girl?" What about boys?

Probe: How do other students react about girls who deviate? What about boys who deviate? What about adults?

### **D2: Can you think of times when boys have been allowed to do something that girls were denied (e.g. fighting/cussing?)**

Probe: How do girls usually respond to this?

Probe: Do most girl peers try to root her on or discourage her from doing this?

Probe: Are there any examples of flipping that scenario?

### **D3: Let's say that a boy in school is known for snapping girls' bras, "accidentally" touching their butts, or referring to girls in sexual terms. How is this behavior generally received? If name-calling occurs, what would these names be?**

Probe: How do girls typically respond to this? What about boys? What about adults such as teachers or parents?

Probe: How would most people describe this boy?

Probe: Do girls get their bra straps snapped? If so, what does the school do about this?

### **D4: Now, let's say that a girl is known for slapping guys' butts, touching their pants between their legs, or referring to guys in sexual terms. How is this generally received? If name-calling occurs, what would those names be?**

Probe: How do boys typically respond to this? What about girls? What about adults such as teachers or parents?

Probe: How would most people describe this girl?

Probe: What does the school do if a girl doesn't wear a bra to school? If she wears a "short" skirt?

### **Adaptations**

*Girls and women must respond to the different gendered experiences as they are a product of the community infrastructure, local gender regime, and at times, coercive sexual environment. For many girls, their responses include engaging in status offenses (e.g. running away and truancy) (Thornberry, Huizinga, & Loeber, 2004; Sherman & Balck, 2015). At times, they engage in sexual deviance and drug/alcohol use (Popkin et al., 2015; Popkin et al., 2016; SAMHSA, 2017). With limited availability or accessibility to local interventions, girls may engage in self-harming behavior as well as other forms of maladaptive coping (Popkin et al., 2010; The National Crittenton Foundation, 2017). Within the court system, some judges have reported detaining girls who runaway or commit other status offenses as a means of "protecting" them (Bishop & Frazier, 1996; Sherman & Balck, 2015).*

### **E1: When girls find themselves in need of help or advice, what sorts of activities and services are/were available in your community (e.g. churches, organizations, mental health)?**

Probe: What do most girls do outside of school? What do most boys do outside of school?

Probe: Are most teens encouraged to engage in some sort of activity within the school or community?

Probe: Church involvement.

### **E2: Sometimes kids can get in trouble for what is called a status offense. A status offense is something that might be against the law for minors but not for adults. For example, being truant from school is a status offense. What do you know about how this works and what happens to a student who is truant from school?**

Probe: What is the city curfew in your community? Is it enforced by law enforcement? What happens to girls if they are out past curfew? What about boys?

Probe: How often do girls run away from home? What about boys? Why do they run away?

Probe: How do kids respond when they hear of someone running away? What about parents? Teachers?

Probe: Describe the use of drugs/alcohol in your school? What do others say about girls who drink/use? What about boys?

### **E3: OK, now let's talk about self-harming behavior. Do you know anyone who has self-harmed in any way? Can you tell me about that?**

Probe: If you had to give a percentage, what percentage of girls in your school engage in self-harming behavior (e.g. cutting themselves). Why do you think they do this?

Probe: What would a teacher do if he/she observed this behavior? What would a parent do? What about another teen?

Probe: Tell me a little bit about your mental health history and your own experiences with self-harm.

**E4: I want you to picture the following: There is a girl in your school who doesn't attend school at least once a week. She doesn't participate in any programs at school such as clubs or athletics. She can usually be spotted walking down your town's main drag in the evenings until about 11:00 p.m. You've heard that she's been picked up by the police for running away from home. Usually her parents report her. Rumor has it, she smokes meth when given the chance. She wears long sleeves even in really hot weather, and some say it's because she wants to hide something under her sleeves. Most girls refer to her as being "loose" and most guys joke that if you can't get with her, you're hopeless.**

**First, do you know anyone who sort of fits this scenario?**

Probe: If you can, will you give your best guess at explaining this girl's life aside from the information you've been provided.

Probe: Why do girls skip school? Why do girls run away from home? Why do girls use drugs? Why might some girls engage in more sexual relationships than others?

### **Local Interventions/Criminal Justice System**

**F1: If someone in your community was being abused, would you know where to tell them to go? Would your friends know?**

Probe: How likely are teachers to call in/refer a student for help based on something they've seen or heard about a kid?

Probe: What do kids say or think about "abused" kids?

Probe: Tell me about your own abuse history or any times when you felt you needed help.

**F2: Do most parents in your community know what their kids are doing?**

Probe: How knowledgeable are most parents when it comes to recognizing if something isn't right with their teen kids?

Probe: Would most parents try to help their kid if they knew they were struggling with an issue (e.g. school or drugs)?

Probe: What type of help might a parent(s) seek for their kid?

**F3: Do you feel your community responded appropriately to you and the situation that led you into the criminal justice system? Why or why not?**

Probe: What about being sent to KJCC. Was this a fair consequence for your behaviors? Why or why not?

Probe: If a boy your age engaged in the same behaviors, would they also be at KJCC?

Probe: Why do you think kids are sent to correctional facilities?

Probe: Is this different for boys/girls?

Probe: What do girls at KJCC need more of? Less of?

**F4: If you had to guess, what percentage of girls receive visits/phone calls/receive letters from family members? From friends?**

Probe: How does someone do their time if they have no outside supports?

Probe: Why do you think some girls don't have contact with friends/family?

Probe: How do you think communities respond when girls are released and return to their hometowns?

### **Wrap-up**

*In addition to the goal to end on a positive note, this section will include the debriefing statement and conclusion to the interview, with an explanation of what to expect for follow-up.*

**G1: If you could go back and have a conversation with yourself, say, \_\_\_\_ years ago, what would you tell yourself? What do you wish that people knew about you?**

Probe: What were some choices that *others* could have made when responding to you and/or your needs?

Probe: What do you know now that you wish you knew then?

**G2: What do you think communities and schools could do to improve how they help kids? Parents?**

Probe: What about the juvenile justice system?

Probe: Of these different groups, which group do you feel has the most influence on a teen's life?

**G3: If you were a person in charge in your community for one day, what would you do that you would hope would help improve the lives of young girls?**

Probe: What is currently the *most* pressing need for teen girls? What suggestions do you have for addressing this need?



## Appendix B - Interview schedule-TCF

### Introduction and Basic Demographics

*After going over the informed consent document and securing signatures, the researcher will spend some time further explaining the goals of the project, sharing background information, and gathering basic demographic information from the participant, including full **name, age, race/ethnicity, place of birth and childhood information, date of entry into the Kansas correctional system, length of sentence, and expected release.** Identifying information will be stored separately, connected with a project ID #, in a secure, password-protected environment available only to the PI and the PhD candidate.*

**Let me start by telling you a bit about me and this project. My name is April Terry and I am a graduate student at Kansas State University. As part of my program, I get to talk with girls/women at KJCC and TCF about their childhood experiences. I want to help the state of Kansas better understand what happens within communities that may influence entrance into the justice system. Your willingness to talk with me could lead to Kansas making changes to help prevent youth from entering into the justice system.**

**Now, I'd like to learn a bit about you. Can you tell me a little about where you're from?**

**NOTE: The aim is to elicit open conversation from the participants without leading suggestions. The overall tone is expected to be friendly and conversational, and to encourage the participants to engage as the experts in this situation. Probes are provided simply to guide the interviewer toward the concepts indicated in the proposal and may not be used verbatim.**

### Community Infrastructure

*A bulk of the literature on life-course and social disorganization theory has been analyzed using male participants. This section will allow for the females to share their voices on their perceptions regarding their community climate. We hope to elicit ideas associated with life course perspectives (e.g. **collective efficacy**) and community structure (e.g. **organizations**). We also hope to discuss gender dynamics (e.g. **ruling apparatus and opportunity structures connected to gendering**) specific to their community.*

**A1: How would you describe your neighborhood/community to an “outsider” – someone who has never been to your community?**

Probe: What sorts of activities are/were available in your community (e.g. churches, organizations, clubs)?

Probe: What kinds of things are kids encouraged to do?

Probe: How are teens, in general, viewed in your town? (Boys? Girls?)

Probe: In your community, are certain family names known as either more or less deserving of police attention?

**A1b: Recalling your teen years, how would you describe that neighborhood/community to an “outsider?”**

Probe: What kinds of things were kids encouraged to do? How is this different today than when you were a kid?

**A2: What kinds of jobs and other activities were available for teens in your childhood community?**

Probe: Do boys and girls work similar jobs?

Probe: How would your life be different if you grew up a boy?

**A3: How did your childhood community respond when behaviors of teens were frowned upon?**

Probe: Can you give me an example of a time when you felt you were being watched, or corrected as a teen?

Probe: What about a time when you felt like you were a valued member of the community-during your teen years?

Probe: Was there a difference in how people were treated between newcomers and families that have been here/there for generations?

**Local Gender Regime**

*This section addresses how the participant views the local **gender regime** with a particular interest in the awareness and description of **hegemonic masculinity**. Studies have shown that multiple social **institutions** respond differently to girls’ and boys’ behavior. For example, sexual harassment in schools flourish due to school climate (e.g. allowing inappropriate language and behavior) which negatively affects girls more than boys (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). This section hopes to elicit discussion on the local **culture** and how individuals or groups may treat girls’ behavior differently when compared to their male counterparts.*

**B1: What kinds of work and positions of leadership did men hold in your childhood community?**

Probe: Women? Who were the role models? What about when you were a teen in school?

Probe: If your community’s Facebook page ran a story about the most valuable community member, who would that be and why?

**B2: Recalling your teen years, how did kids at your school interact?**

Probe: What about exclusive groups or “cliques” in your school?

Probe: What about dating: what was expected? Do you think teen dating has changed since you were younger?

Probe: What other activities did kids do around your town?

**B3: What were typical behaviors that would get girls/boys in trouble in your community?**

Probe: What happened when boys got in trouble? Girls?

Probe: How did the police and other authorities react? Parents? The school?

Probe: Do you believe the responses have changed since you were a teen? How so?

## **Coercive Sexual Environments**

*This section addresses the heart of the current research, and the researcher will spend some time eliciting information from the participant about their community's ideology towards **sexualized norms and gendered violence**. Included will be an exploration of their experiences with exposure to sexual violence/coercion. An attempt will be made to better understand how community ideology and/or exposure to sexual violence/coercion provides a pipeline from victimization to prison. For many juvenile justice involved female youth, the involvement in offending behavior is usually a cover-up from other serious problems experienced by the girl (Saar et al., 2015). These girls then enter into the juvenile justice system even though they generally pose little to no threat to public safety (Puzzanchera, 2014). In most cases, this is a product of **gendered social control**.*

**C1: Imagine that you're a teenager again. Now imagine a teen girl and teen guy are dating. The girl's parents aren't home so she invites her boyfriend over. They decide to have sex. Word gets around. What reactions would you expect?**

Probe: What do the girl's parents think when they find out? What do the boy's parents think when they find out?

Probe: What would other students at school say about the girl? About the boy? What would most teachers say? Would law enforcement ever be involved?

**C1b: Imagine the same initial scene. A teen girl and teen boy are dating. The boy comes over to the girl's home. The boy tries to pressure her into having sex but she pushes him off repeatedly and tells him that she doesn't want to. The girl tells her friends what happened. What do they say? The boy tells his friends, what do they say? Did anything illegal happen here? Unethical?**

**C2: In thinking back to your teen years, when a girl in your community engaged in sexual activity of any kind, what happened? How was she treated by others? Other girls? Boys? Adults?**

Probe: What names was she called?

Probe: When you were a teenager, what one word would be used to describe a girl who was known to have sex? Why *this* one word?

Probe: Do you think girls who have sex today are viewed/treated the same as when you were a teen?

Probe: If I asked a random set of ten students in your school what number would be a lot of sexual partners for a girl, what would I have heard?

**C2b: Similarly, in thinking back to your teenage years, what happened when a boy engaged in sexual activity of any kind? How was he treated by others? Other boys? Girls? Adults?**

Probe: What names was he called?

Probe: When you were a teenager, what one word would be used to describe a boy who was known to have sex? Why *this* one word?

Probe: Do you think boys who have sex today are viewed/treated the same as when you were a teen?

**C3: When you were a teen in school, if a girl were to tell someone that she was sexually assaulted, how would people have reacted? Describe the girl who is/was most likely to be believed. Least likely to be believed?**

Probe: Which girls were most likely to be believed by other girls? By male peers? By adults?

Probe: Picture a girl who has reported a sexual assault, say last year. Now picture the same girl disclosing another sexual assault. Does this change whether or not she is believed?

**C4: What places or groups in your community are known for allowing or even encouraging sexual activity?**

Probe: When you were a teen, what percentage of girls your age do you think had been sexually assaulted?

Probe: Where did this usually occur? By whom (e.g. friend, family member)?

Probe: In what way, if at all, do you think this has changed for the teens of today?

**C5: I hear that sometimes teen girls trade sexual acts for favors or things they want. How often did this happen in your community?**

Probe: What favor or item was most likely to be traded? Were there other avenues for girls to obtain these desired favors/items?

Probe: Were there certain groups or cliques of girls who were more likely to trade sexual acts for favors or items? How did this happen?

Probe: What about boys? Were you aware of boys who traded sexual acts for favors or things? If so, what were they usually trading for?

**C5b: In referencing back to your childhood neighborhood, how often do you think that adult women traded sexual acts for favors or things they wanted?**

**C6: In recalling your teen years, tell me about any times you experienced an unwanted sexual comment, gesture, or joke in any form.**

Probe: The questions/examples I've provided have all assumed a straight sexual preference. Using the following line, where do you see yourself:

Straight----- gay

Probe: What were some common sexual rumors that surfaced around your school? Who started them? How did people know about the rumors, and what did kids do about the rumors?

Probe: (If texting was around): What were some common unwanted sexual texts that were received? Who sent them? Who received them?

Probe: If I randomly selected ten girls from your middle or high school, how many would say they had been the victim of negative sexual rumors?

## Gendered Experiences

Since West and Zimmerman's (1987) work on "**doing gender**" was introduced thirty years ago, scholars have continued attempting to explain the process of gendered social interactions. Doing gender sometimes means owning up to socially prescribed gender norms and engaging in expected gendered behavior. Other times, it may include actions of resistance to gender norms. **Group consciousness refers to the awareness of commonalities and shared histories** of girls and women, based on their power and position in society. The most obvious way to measure this is to look at ways in which the local community encourages or discourages girls and their goals. We look for ways in which girls and women access and practice **agency** in such environments, as well as vulnerability to multiple forms of abuse (Blessinger, 2015). **Poly-victimization refers to a constellation of ways in which girls and women are often victimized, establishing what has been shown to serve as a pipeline for girls and women into the criminal justice system** (Smith, Leve, & Chamberlain, 2006; Sherman & Balck, 2015).

### **D1: When you were a teen, what did it mean to, "act like a girl?" What did it mean to, "act like a boy?"**

Probe: For you specifically, where do you see yourself on the following line:

Very feminine-----Very masculine

Probe: What happened when a girl deviated from the standards you gave for "acting like a girl?" What about if a boy deviated?

Probe: What were some things that girls could get away with that may not be considered, "acting like a girl?" What about boys?

Probe: How did other students react about girls who deviated? What about boys who deviated? What about adults?

Probe: Have these expressions changed since you were a teen? In what way(s)?

Probe: Do these expressions have a different meaning for adults? If yes, how so?

### **D2: In recalling your teen years, can you think of times when boys were allowed to do something that girls were denied (e.g. fighting/cussing?)**

Probe: How did girls usually respond to this?

Probe: Did most girl peers try to root her on or discourage her from doing this?

Probe: Were there any examples of flipping that scenario?

Probe: What about current day teens; has this changed?

### **D3: Imagine for a moment that you are a teenager again and listen to the following: Let's say that a boy in school is known for snapping girls' bras, "accidentally" touching their butts, or referring to girls in sexual terms. How is this behavior generally received? If name-calling occurs, what would these names be?**

Probe: How would girls typically respond to this? What about boys? What about adults such as teachers or parents?

Probe: What sort of reputation do these boys have?

Probe: When you were a teen, did girls get their bra straps snapped? If so, what did the school do about this?

**D4: Now, let's say that a girl is known for slapping guys' butts, touching their pants between their legs, or referring to guys in sexual terms. How is this generally received? If name-calling occurs, what would those names be?**

Probe: How would boys typically respond to this? What about girls? What about adults such as teachers or parents?

Probe: What sort of reputation do these girls have?

Probe: What did the school do if a girl wouldn't wear a bra to school? What if she wore a "short" skirt?

### **Adaptations**

*Girls and women must respond to the different gendered experiences as they are a product of the **community infrastructure, local gender regime, and at times, coercive sexual environment**. For many girls, their responses include engaging in **status offenses** (e.g. running away and truancy) (Thornberry, Huizinga, & Loeber, 2004; Sherman & Balck, 2015). At times, they engage in sexual deviance and drug/alcohol use (Popkin et al., 2015; Popkin et al., 2016; SAMHSA, 2017). With limited availability or accessibility to **local interventions**, girls may engage in **self-harming behavior** as well as other forms of maladaptive coping (Popkin et al., 2010; The National Crittenton Foundation, 2017). Within the court system, some judges have reported detaining girls who runaway or commit other status offenses as a means of "protecting" them (Bishop & Frazier, 1996; Sherman & Balck, 2015).*

**E1: As a teen, when girls found themselves in need of help or advice, what sorts of activities and services were available in your community (e.g. churches, organizations, mental health)?**

Probe: What did most girls do outside of school? What did most boys do outside of school?

Probe: Were most teens encouraged to engage in some sort of activity within the school or community?

Probe: What sorts of services are available for girls in your current community?

**E2: Sometimes kids can get in trouble for what is called a status offense. A status offense is something that might be against the law for minors but not for adults. For example, being truant from school is a status offense. What do you know about how this works and what happens to a student who is truant from school?**

Probe: What was the city curfew in your childhood community? Was it enforced by law enforcement? What happened to girls if they are out past curfew? What about boys?

Probe: How often did girls run away from home? What about boys? Why did they run away?

Probe: How did kids respond when they heard of someone running away? What about parents? Teachers?

Probe: Describe the use of drugs/alcohol in your middle/high school? What did others say about girls who drink/use? What about boys?

**E3: OK, now let's talk about self-harming behavior. Do you know anyone who has self-harmed in any way? Can you tell me about that?**

Probe: If you had to give a percentage, what percentage of girls in your middle/high school engaged in self-harming behavior (e.g. cutting themselves)? Why do you think they did this?

Probe: What would a teacher do if he/she observed this behavior? What would a parent do? What about another teen?

**E4: I want you to picture the following as if you were a teen again: There is a girl in your school who doesn't attend school at least once a week. She doesn't participate in any programs at school such as clubs or athletics. She can usually be spotted walking down your town's main drag in the evenings until about 11:00 p.m. You've heard that she's been picked up by the police for running away from home. Usually her parents report her. Rumor has it, she smokes meth when given the chance. She wears long sleeves even in really hot weather, and some say it's because she wants to hide something under her sleeves. Most girls refer to her as being "loose" and most guys joke that if you can't get with her, you're hopeless. First, do you know anyone who sort of fits this scenario?**

Probe: If you can, will you give your best guess at explaining this girl's life aside from the information you've been provided.

Probe: Why do girls skip school? Why do girls run away from home? Why do girls use drugs? Why might some girls engage in more sexual relationships than others?

### **Local Interventions/Criminal Justice System**

**F1: If someone in your community was being abused, would you know where to tell them to go? Would your friends know?**

Probe: What about if you were a teen; would you have known where to go for help? Would your friends have known?

Probe: How likely were teachers to call in/refer a student for help based on something they saw or heard about a kid?

Probe: What do kids say or think about "abused" kids?

**F2: As a teen, did you find that most parents in your community knew what their kids were doing?**

Probe: How knowledgeable are most parents when it comes to recognizing if something isn't right with their teen kids?

Probe: Would most parents try to help their kid if they knew they were struggling with an issue (e.g. school or drugs)?

Probe: What type of help might a parent(s) seek for their kid?

**F3: Do you feel your community responded appropriately to you and the situation that led you into the criminal justice system? Why or why not?**

Probe: What about being sent to TCF. Was this a fair consequence for your behaviors? Why or why not?

Probe: If a man your age engaged in the same behaviors, would they also be at a correctional facility?

Probe: Why do you think kids are sent to correctional facilities?

Probe: Is this different for boys/girls?

Probe: What do girls at KJCC need more of? Less of?

### **Wrap-up**

*In addition to the goal to end on a positive note, this section will include the debriefing statement and conclusion to the interview, with an explanation of what to expect for follow-up.*

### **G1: If you could go back and have a conversation with yourself, say, \_\_\_\_ years ago, what would you tell yourself? What do you wish that people knew about you?**

Probe: What were some choices that *others* could have made when responding to you and/or your needs?

Probe: What do you know now that you wish you knew then?

### **G2: What do you think communities and schools could do to improve how they help kids? Parents?**

Probe: What about the juvenile justice system?

Probe: Of these different groups, which group do you feel has the most influence on a teen's life?

### **G3: If you were a person in charge in your community for one day, what would you do that you would hope would help improve the lives of young girls?**

Probe: What is currently the *most* pressing need for teen girls? What suggestions do you have for addressing this need?



## Appendix C - Interview schedule-Community actors

### Sexualized environments: Criminal justice involved girls in the heartland

#### Introduction and Basic Background

*The researcher will inquire about the individual's **occupation**, **years in the field**, other relevant experience, and number of years they have **resided** within the given community.*

**Let me start by telling you a bit about me and this project. My name is April Terry and I am a graduate student at Kansas State University. As part of my program, I get to talk with girls/women at KJCC and TCF about their childhood experiences. I want to help the state of Kansas better understand what happens within communities that may influence entrance into the justice system. I also want to talk with a variety of community members. For example, school staff, clergy, and community corrections/court services, to list a few. Your willingness to talk with me could lead to Kansas making changes to help prevent youth from entering into the justice system.**

#### Community Infrastructure

*The bulk of literature on life-course and place-level studies has been analyzed using male participants in urban areas. This section will allow for girls, primarily from non-urban places, to share their voices regarding their community climate. We hope to elicit ideas associated with life course perspectives (e.g. **collective efficacy**) and community structure (e.g. **organizations**). We also hope to discuss gender dynamics (e.g. **ruling apparatus** and **opportunity structures connected to gendering**) specific to their community.*

#### **A1: How would you describe your neighborhood/community to an “outsider” – someone who has never been to your community?**

Probe: What sorts of activities are available in your community (e.g. churches, organizations, clubs)?

Probe: What kinds of things are kids encouraged to do? What kind of things are kids told not to do?

Probe: How are teens, in general, viewed in your town? (Boys? Girls?)

#### **A2: What kinds of jobs and other activities are available for teens in your community?**

Probe: Do boys work at different places than girls?

#### **A3: How does your community respond when behaviors of teens are frowned upon?**

Probe: Is there a difference in how people are treated between newcomers and families that have been here for generations?

Probe: Do most people in your community know what others are up to?

#### Local Gender Regime

*This section addresses how the participant views the local **gender regime** with a particular interest in the awareness and description of **hegemonic masculinity**. Studies have shown that*

multiple social *institutions* respond differently to girls' and boys' behavior. For example, sexual harassment in schools flourish due to school climate (e.g. allowing inappropriate language and behavior) which negatively affects girls more than boys (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). This section hopes to elicit discussion on the local *culture* and how individuals or groups may treat girls' behavior differently when compared to their male counterparts.

**B1: How do most kids in school interact?**

- Probe: What about exclusive groups or “cliques” within the schools?
- Probe: What about dating: what is expected?
- Probe: What other activities do kids do around there?

**B2: What are typical behaviors that would get girls/boys in trouble in your community?**

- Probe: What happens when boys get in trouble? Girls?
- Probe: How do the police and other authorities react? Parents? The school?
- Probe: How do the courts handle girls' behavior? Boys' behavior?

**Coercive Sexual Environments**

*This section addresses the heart of the current research, and the researcher will spend some time eliciting information from the participant about their community's ideology towards **sexualized norms** and **gendered violence**. Included will be an exploration of their experiences with exposure to sexual violence/coercion. An attempt will be made to better understand how community ideology and/or exposure to sexual violence/coercion provides a pipeline from victimization to prison. For many juvenile justice involved female youth, the involvement in offending behavior is usually a cover-up from other serious problems experienced by the girl (Saar et al., 2015). These girls then enter into the juvenile justice system even though they generally pose little to no threat to public safety (Puzzanchera, 2014). In most cases, this is a product of **gendered social control**.*

**C1: If a teen girl in your community were to tell someone that she was sexually assaulted, how would people react? Describe the girl who is most likely to be believed. Least likely to be believed?**

- Probe: Which girls are most likely to be believed by other girls? By male peers? By adults?
- Probe: Picture a girl who has reported a sexual assault, say last year. Now picture the same girl disclosing another sexual assault. Does this change whether or not she is believed?

**C2: Are there places or groups in your community that are known for allowing or even encouraging sexual activity?**

- Probe: What percentage of girls your age do you think have been sexually assaulted?
- Probe: Where does this usually occur? By whom (e.g. friend, family member)?

**C3: How often have you heard of girls trading sexual acts for favors or things they want?**

- Probe: What favor or item is most likely to be traded? Are there other avenues for girls to obtain these desired favors/items?

Probe: Are there certain groups or cliques of girls who are more likely to trade sexual acts for favors or items? How does this happen?

Probe: What about boys? Are you aware of boys who trade sexual acts for favors or things? If so, what are they usually trading for?

### **Gendered Experiences**

*Since West and Zimmerman's (1987) work on "doing gender" was introduced thirty years ago, scholars have continued attempting to explain the process of gendered social interactions. Doing gender sometimes means owning up to socially prescribed gender norms and engaging in expected gendered behavior. Other times, it may include actions of resistance to gender norms. Group consciousness refers to the awareness of commonalities and shared histories of girls and women, based on their power and position in society. The most obvious way to measure this is to look at ways in which the local community encourages or discourages girls and their goals. We look for ways in which girls and women access and practice agency in such environments, as well as vulnerability to multiple forms of abuse (Blessinger, 2015). Poly-victimization refers to a constellation of ways in which girls and women are often victimized, establishing what has been shown to serve as a pipeline for girls and women into the criminal justice system (Smith, Leve, & Chamberlain, 2006; Sherman & Balck, 2015).*

#### **D1: In your community, what does it mean to, "act like a girl?" What does it mean to, "act like a boy?"**

Probe: What happens when a girl deviates from the standards you gave for "acting like a girl?" What about if a boy deviates?

Probe: What are some things that girls can get away with that may not be considered, "acting like a girl?" What about boys?

Probe: How do people in your community react to girls who deviate? What about boys who deviate? What about adults?

#### **D2: What about possessing guns? Does this vary for men and women here? Why do people own guns?**

Probe: Protection; hunting; sport shooting; 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment right; hobby/collection.

#### **D3: Can you think of times when boys have been allowed to do something that girls were denied (e.g. fighting/cussing?)**

Probe: How do girls usually respond to this?

Probe: Are there any examples of flipping that scenario?

### **Adaptations**

*Girls and women must respond to the different gendered experiences as they are a product of the community infrastructure, local gender regime, and at times, coercive sexual environment. For many girls, their responses include engaging in status offenses (e.g. running away and truancy) (Thornberry, Huizinga, & Loeber, 2004; Sherman & Balck, 2015). At times, they engage in sexual deviance and drug/alcohol use (Popkin et al., 2015; Popkin et al., 2016; SAMHSA, 2017).*

*With limited availability or accessibility to **local interventions**, girls may engage in **self-harming** behavior as well as other forms of maladaptive coping (Popkin et al., 2010; The National Crittenton Foundation, 2017). Within the court system, some judges have reported detaining girls who runaway or commit other status offenses as a means of “protecting” them (Bishop & Frazier, 1996; Sherman & Balck, 2015).*

**E1: When girls find themselves in need of help or advice, what sorts of activities and services are available in your community (e.g. churches, organizations, mental health)?**

Probe: What do most girls do outside of school? What do most boys do outside of school?

Probe: Are most teens encouraged to engage in some sort of activity within the school or community?

**E2: Sometimes kids can get in trouble for what is called a status offense. A status offense is something that might be against the law for minors but not for adults. For example, being truant from school is a status offense. What do you know about how this works and what happens to a student who is truant from school?**

Probe: What is the city curfew in your community? Is it enforced by law enforcement? What happens to girls if they are out past curfew? What about boys?

Probe: How often do girls run away from home? What about boys? Why do they run away?

Probe: Describe the use of drugs/alcohol by teens in your community? What do others say about girls who drink/use? What about boys?

## **Local Interventions/Criminal Justice System**

**F1: If someone in your community was being abused, would the average person know where to tell them to go?**

Probe: How likely are teachers to call in/refer a student for help based on something they've seen or heard about a kid?

**F2: Do most parents in your community know what their kids are doing?**

Probe: How knowledgeable are most parents when it comes to recognizing if something isn't right with their teen kids?

Probe: Would most parents try to help their kid if they knew they were struggling with an issue (e.g. school or drugs)?

Probe: What type of help might a parent(s) seek for their kid?

## **Wrap-up**

*The wrap-up will consist of asking the individual if they have any other information they would like to share which was not covered during the interview. They will also be asked to provide the names of any other individuals in their community who they think would be able to provide fruitful insight into the above questions.*

**G1: What do you think communities and schools could do to improve how they help kids?  
Parents?**

Probe: What about the juvenile justice system?

Probe: Of these different groups, which group do you feel has the most influence on a teen's life?

**G2: If you were a person in charge in your community for one day, what would you do that you would hope would help improve the lives of young girls?**

Probe: What is currently the *most* pressing need for teen girls? What suggestions do you have for addressing this need?

## Appendix D - IRB approval form



TO: Dr. L. Susan Williams  
Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work  
253-A Waters Hall

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair  
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 09/06/2017

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Sexualized Environments: Pathways for Criminal Justice Involved Girls in the Heartland."

Proposal Number: 8887

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for one year from the date of this correspondence, pending "continuing review."**

APPROVAL DATE: 09/06/2017

EXPIRATION DATE: 09/06/2018

Several months prior to the expiration date listed, the IRB will solicit information from you for federally mandated "**continuing review**" of the research. Based on the review, the IRB may approve the activity for another year. **If continuing IRB approval is not granted, or the IRB fails to perform the continuing review before the expiration date noted above, the project will expire and the activity involving human subjects must be terminated on that date. Consequently, it is critical that you are responsive to the IRB request for information for continuing review if you want your project to continue.**

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

- There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.  
 There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

## Appendix E - KDOC approval email

**From:** Megan Milner [KDOC] [<mailto:Megan.Milner@ks.gov>]  
**Sent:** Friday, September 1, 2017 8:06 AM  
**To:** April Terry <[anterry2@ksu.edu](mailto:anterry2@ksu.edu)>; L Williams <[lswilli@ksu.edu](mailto:lswilli@ksu.edu)>  
**Cc:** Kyle Rohr [KDOC] <[Kyle.Rohr@ks.gov](mailto:Kyle.Rohr@ks.gov)>; Shannon Meyer - TCF [KDOC] <[Shannon.Meyer@ks.gov](mailto:Shannon.Meyer@ks.gov)>  
**Subject:** Research Proposal

I received word this morning that your research proposal has been approved by the KDOC Senior Management Team and Secretary Norwood. You're clear to proceed!

Please let me know how I can help throughout the process or if there's anything you need from us.

Congratulations and good luck!

Megan Milner, MS, CPM  
Director of Community Based Services  
Kansas Department of Corrections – Juvenile Services  
714 SW Jackson, Suite 300  
Topeka, KS 66603  
Office: (785) 368-7400  
Cell: (785) 230-7103

# Appendix F - Inmate consent form

## KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

### INFORMED CONSENT

<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b>	<b>Sexualized Environments: Pathways for Criminal Justice Involved Girls in the Heartland</b>
<b>APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT:</b> _____	<b>EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT:</b> _____
<b>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):</b>	<b>L. Susan Williams &amp; April Terry</b>
<b>CONTACT AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/ QUESTIONS:</b>	<b>Kansas State University: Department of Sociology, Anthropology, &amp; Social Work 785-532-6865</b>
<b>IRB CHAIR CONTACT/ PHONE INFORMATION:</b>	Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.
<b>SPONSOR OF PROJECT:</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS RESEARCH?</b>	The project's purpose is to better understand what community factors influence girls' and women's entrance into the juvenile justice system and adult criminal justice system. In particular, how have Kansas policies and local culture influenced the admission rates of girls into the juvenile correctional facility? Additionally, what experiences have girls had within their communities that place them at greater risk for being involved in the juvenile justice system? Does this pathway then lead female youth into the adult criminal justice system?
<b>WHAT WILL I BE REQUIRED TO DO?</b>	As a participant, you will have the opportunity to participate in an interview with the co-investigator, April Terry. The interview will last approximately one hour.  By signing the consent form, you are also providing consent for the co-investigator to have access to certain parts of your medical records. Specifically, the co-investigator is interested in any psychological testing (e.g. Adverse Childhood Experiences assessment) and diagnoses (e.g. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) that may be documented. The researchers will not review any medical information related to physical health.  The co-investigator will also speak to individuals (e.g. probation officers and school administration) within your hometown community to better understand the community atmosphere. Absolutely <b>no</b> information about you will be discussed. The study hopes to understand what characteristics exist within communities that may influence girls' and women's paths into the system.
<b>WILL BEING IN THIS STUDY HELP ME?</b>	Participating in the study will not directly provide any advantages to you or your current case. However, the goal of the study is to better understand what is happening within Kansas communities which may encourage girls' and women's entrance into the criminal justice system. Your assistance could help prevent girls and women from entering the system through Kansas specific policy changes.
<b>ARE THERE OTHER OPTIONS THAT MAY HELP ME?</b>	There are no alternative research options. If you feel that you are in need of some form of help, please contact your corrections counselor for facility-specific assistance.

Last revised on May 20, 2004



**HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE ME TO COMPLETE THE TASK?**

The interview should last approximately one hour.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF I SAY “NO”?**

You have complete authority in deciding whether or not you want to participate. If you should decide that you do not want to participate, there will be **no** consequences or penalty. You may also choose to say “no” to any individual questions that you may not want to answer.

The bottom of this form asks you to sign giving your consent to be interviewed. In order to ensure that the co-investigator hears everything that you want to share, we also ask for your consent to be audio recorded. **Please initial here for your interview to be audio recorded.**

**WHAT HAPPENS IF I CHANGE MY MIND AND WANT TO STOP?**

You may opt out of the study at any time without any consequences.

**IS THERE ANYTHING BAD THAT COULD HAPPEN TO ME?**

It is not anticipated that anything bad should happen to you as a participant. You may experience emotions based on the nature of the questions and in recalling past experiences with violence. Many of the questions ask specifically about experiences with, or knowledge of, sexual assault. If you should become upset during the interview, you may stop at any time, without any consequence. If you should feel upset after the completion of the interview, you are strongly encouraged to submit a mental health request form. We can assist in getting you these forms.

The co-investigator hopes to have an open and honest conversation with you about your childhood experiences. However, as a participant, you should know that if you disclose the **names** and specific **details** about child abuse/neglect that have not been previously reported, or intent to harm yourself or others, the co-investigator will have to report this to the appropriate entities (e.g. facility administration or the Department for Children and Families). It is suggested that you speak in general terms without identifying specific individuals by name, unless you do want assistance with reporting an issue. If that is the case, the co-investigator will ask your permission to have a facility administrator/ corrections counselor present to assist in the disclosure and reporting process.

**WHO WILL SEE MY RESULTS?**

Data are collected for research purposes only. The information collected for this study will be used only for the purpose of conducting this study. Results from the study may be presented at meetings or published; however, what you say remains strictly confidential. That is, no one can link what you say to you individually. Where necessary, we will protect the confidentiality by changing any identifying remarks or characteristics. Furthermore, data will be stored under lock & key within the interviewer's locked office. Data will be maintained as detailed by the APA ethics code.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED OR UPSET?**

Since the current study involves interviewing, it is not anticipated that any physical injury should occur. If you become upset for any reason, you can/will be provided with assistance in locating a mental health request form and/or speaking with a facility psychologist immediately. You also have the right to end the interview at any time, without any consequence.

**PARENTAL/GUARDIAN APPROVAL FOR MINORS:**

Last revised on May 20, 2004

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**TERMS OF PARTICIPATION:** I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

*Any possible advantages accruing to the volunteer subject through his or her participation in the research, when compared the general living conditions, medical care, quality of food, amenities and opportunity for earnings, are not of such a magnitude that his or her ability to weigh the risks of the research against the value of such advantages in the limited choice environment is impaired (Office for Human Research Protections).*

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant)

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness to Signature: (project staff) \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix G - Community actor consent form



## Institutional Review Board (IRB) Informed Consent Template Form

comply@k-state.edu | 785-532-3224

### PROJECT TITLE:

Sexualized Environments: Pathways for Criminal Justice Involved Youth in the Heartland.

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE: 9/6/107 PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE: 9/6/2018 LENGTH OF STUDY:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: L. Sue Williams

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): April Terry

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: 785-532-6865 or anterry2@ksu.edu or lswilli@ksu.edu

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION: Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PROJECT SPONSOR:

### PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The project's purpose is to better understand what community factors influence girls' and women's entrance into the juvenile justice system and adult criminal justice system. In particular, how have Kansas policies and local culture influenced the admission rates of girls into the juvenile correctional facility? Additionally, what experiences have girls had within their communities that place them at greater risk for being involved in the juvenile justice system? Does this pathway then lead female youth into the adult criminal justice system?

### PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

Prior to this study, juveniles at the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex and women at the Topeka Correctional Facility were interviewed. This is a follow-up to those interviews. This interview is simply used to inquire about community characteristics as a whole and is not specific to any individual inmate.

We ask for your assent (your verbal permission) and consent (your written permission) to be interviewed. We also would like your consent for your interview to be audio recorded. Please initial here \_\_\_\_\_ for your interview to be audio recorded.

If you are interested in participating, please read and sign this consent form. You will be given an opportunity to ask any questions. The length of time of your participation in this study is approximately 30-40 minutes.

### ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:

Not applicable to this study.

### RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

There are no foreseeable risks involved with participation in this study. However, should you feel distressed or become upset by participating you may terminate the interview at any time.

### BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:

There are no individual incentives for participating in this study. However, your willingness to participate could result in statewide policy changes that help prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system and/or the juvenile correctional facility. Your input will also help aid in understanding the role that communities play when youth enter the juvenile justice system and/or the adult criminal justice system.

### EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

Data is collected only for research purposes. The information collected for this study will be used only for the purpose of conducting this study. Results from the study may be presented at meetings or published; however, all data and contributions remain strictly confidential. That is, no one will be able to link the information you provide to you individually, or to the exact community under study. Furthermore, data will be stored under lock & key within the interviewer's locked office. Data will be maintained as detailed by the APA ethics code.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS?  Yes  No

**PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:**

PARENT/GUARDIAN APPROVAL SIGNATURE:  Date:

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant).

PARTICIPANT NAME:

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE:  Date:

WITNESS TO SIGNATURE: (PROJECT STAFF)  Date:

## Appendix H - Kansas religious signs







## Appendix I - Chaotic Sanctuary

If I were to paint any middle school  
The canvas would ooze forty shades of mean green outlined in bully brown.  
An intense hormone blue fog would hang heavy in the halls.  
There'd be an occasional explosion of scarlet drama and horizontal smudges of purple passion.  
Hundreds of tiny bright speckles of potential would glow under the fluorescents.

...Awkward shapes would both trip and support each other.

If I were to paint my urban middle school  
I would also need to dip my brush into an eclectic and electric palette.  
Swirling ebony braids would fuse with salsa red attitude and screaming neon curls.  
The picture frame would be laced with sinister shades of poverty and black holes of hunger.  
The powerful images would draw you in or push you away from the loud, tight canvas.

...Depending on your willingness to look.

In one corner of the picture, there'd be an escape hatch with a bronze handle.  
It'd be just beyond the beige body scanner and watchful grey eye of surveillance.  
Inside, the yellow cinder block walls would whisper shades of shadowy truth.  
Layer upon layer of tender seeping wounds would cradle a river of crystal-clear tears.  
The corner would reveal deep texture, primal perspectives and cautiously toned confessions.

...It would be impossible to convey the hurt.

What color is pain? Why would I even want to create what people refuse to see?  
Why do we whitewash the trauma of hearts shutting down because of everyday realities?  
Some gloss over it with the subtle dry brush of standardized tests and annual progress data.  
How do we unearth the inspired strokes that will enliven every corner of a broken work of art?  
Do we simply allow what is sacred to fall through the crackled glaze of unmet needs?

...Who decides which ones and how many?