

University of Nevada, Reno

**Gender-Specific Programs for Female Juvenile Offenders: Purpose, Practice and
Perceived Success**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Criminal Justice

by

Lacey Miller

Dr. Monica K. Miller/Thesis Advisor

May, 2010



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We recommend that the thesis
prepared under our supervision by
LACEY DANYEL MILLER

entitled

**Gender-Specific Programs For Female Juvenile Offenders: Purpose, Practice And
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be accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Monica Miller, Advisor

Matthew Leone, Committee Member

Marta Elliott, Graduate School Representative

Marsha H. Read, Ph. D., Associate Dean, Graduate School

May, 2010

Abstract

Female juvenile offenders have increasingly and disproportionately become involved with the juvenile justice system, often as a result of running away, drug use, truancy, and other misdemeanor offenses. Many of these females have experienced negative relationships, abusive situations, and psychological problems. Past research has led to gender-specific programming that is developed to meet the special needs of these young women. Gender-specific programming involves classes, groups, lessons, and settings that include only young women, with topics pertaining to them explicitly. This special programming is thought to be beneficial because it addresses the needs that are unique to females. Gender provides differing social contexts for males and females; the experiences (e.g., abuse), development, and underlying causes of delinquency are different for males and females. Thus, a program that addresses the social contexts that are specific to females would likely be more helpful to female delinquents than a non-gender-specific program. Data was collected from interviews of a sample of young women aged 14-17 who have graduated from a residential program that uses a gender-specific approach and curriculum. This study examined females' perceptions of health, family, school, and other relationships (areas targeted by gender-specific aspects of the program) to see whether these females specifically mention that the gender-specific programming helped them in these areas. It also investigated the females' perceptions of the gender-specific programming more directly (e.g., was it helpful to them). Lastly, this study examined the females' perceptions of what the program might have been like if males had been involved. Results offered insight on gender-specific programming and

provided the basis for policy recommendations. Although this study did not directly assess the *effectiveness* of such programs, the study assessed whether female juvenile offenders *perceived* that the gender-specific programming had a positive impact on various aspects of their lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members Monica Miller, Marta Elliot, and Matthew Leone for all of their help and support throughout my thesis writing process. I would like to give special thanks to Monica Miller for guiding me through the process, believing in my abilities, and pushing me to complete this endeavor. I would also like to thank my parents, Dale and Diane Edwards; my husband, Terry Miller; and my children, Bayley and Rylie Miller, as well as all of my friends and family who have given me constant support, encouragement, and love throughout my education.

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Gender-Specific Programs for Female Juvenile Offenders: Purpose, Practice and Perceived Success

Throughout history, the juvenile justice system has based its programming on a variety of concepts of how best to deal with offenders (Frabutt, DiLuca, & Graves, 2008). These concepts often coincide with community sentiment regarding juvenile crime, and have ranged from the nurturing idea of rehabilitation, to punitive approaches that are tough on crime, and back again to the current trend of approaches based on the principles of restorative justice and therapeutic jurisprudence.

Juvenile offenders are currently often placed in “therapeutic environments” (Flanagan & Duval, 2002; Frabutt et al., 2008). Under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, as interpreted by program developers, both males and females experiencing similar circumstances “are entitled to equal programming and treatment, including detention alternatives” (Sherman, 2005, p. 16; see also Morgan & Patton, 2002). In the early 1990s, researchers began to recognize that the traditional, gender-neutral system focused on the overt characteristics of male offenders, and ignored the introverted, self-destructive behaviors of female offenders (Morgan & Patton, 2002). Research began to demonstrate that young men and women have different issues and needs. Since this recognition, gender-specific programming has become increasingly important as the overall arrest rates for female offenders have increased significantly during this time period (Humphrey, 2004). Though there are recent indications that overall juvenile arrest rates have decreased 3% in the year from 2007 to 2008, the decline for female offenders is less than that for males offenders (Puzzanchera, 2009).

The underlying causes of female delinquency and the special needs of young women are in the forefront of research and program development. Because female offenders tend to perpetuate an intergenerational cycle of offending (Morgan & Patton, 2002; Sherman, 2005), it is of the utmost importance to discover whether the current aim of policy and programming is effective. One of the current trends in preventing, intervening and addressing the needs of these young women is to develop gender-specific programming. The focus of such practices is to understand specifically why individual females become involved in delinquency, and work with them to develop coping skills and promote overall wellbeing. Programs, units within detention, and other facilities have been developed in response to this research. However, very few studies have been conducted on the success of gender-specific policies and practices.

The use of restorative and therapeutic approaches to delinquency by juvenile justice professionals may assist in determining not only how the offender can make amends for their crimes to victims and the community, but also determine how to address the individual needs of the offender. Although juvenile justice professionals are realizing the need to treat offenders appropriately based on gender, there is still much to be learned regarding the specifics of systematic procedures. This has led to much needed research regarding female involvement in the juvenile justice system. In order to completely understand this involvement and predict future behaviors, theoretical analysis must be applied to the data. Though many theories can be applied to this phenomenon (Binder, Geis, & Bruce Jr., 2001), the current study will use social context theory to analyze why female juvenile offenders become involved in the juvenile justice system. This analysis

will also provide a basis for making recommendations about the development of successful gender-specific programming.

The purpose of the present study is to assess female juveniles' perceptions of a particular gender-specific program in Reno, Nevada. The study will assess whether females recognize gender-specific programming, believe it is helpful to them, and think their experience would differ if they were in non-gender-specific programming. The results will help determine whether or not young women feel that their needs are being addressed by gender-specific programs in order to improve familial and community relationships, increase school attachment, and decrease drug use and delinquency. This research may help policymakers and practitioners decide whether or not to continue with the current gender-specific programming, increase the breadth of its use, or make adjustments based on reported deficiencies.

History of the Juvenile Justice System

The development of the juvenile justice system dates back to the Middle Ages in Europe when children were first considered to be different than adults (Elrod & Ryder, 1999). Parenting practices adopted from European values were brought to the New World with settlers. These initial American values were based on the use of social control as a means of managing and disciplining youth (Elrod & Ryder, 1999; Roberts, 2004). The eras of colonization and industrialization, and the continued development of the American government brought changing views on how juveniles develop, how they should be treated, and how they should be protected by society, and at times how society should be protected from them (Binder et al., 2001; Elrod & Ryder, 1999; Roberts, 2004). The culmination of these developing views has led to the creation of the current juvenile justice system.

Early Perceptions of Youth

The end of the European Middle Ages was the beginning of the recognition of childhood as a distinct stage of development (Elrod & Ryder, 1999). Prior to this time, even very young children were seen as property or miniature adults who were not afforded the protections of a separate legal system from adults. The family, which typically consisted of the nuclear family, extended family, friends, and community members, provided discipline by means of social control. This social control mechanism consisted of gossip and ridicule as well as discipline by parents. However, due to the multitude of destitute and wayward youth, and an increase of crime and beggary in England, youth institutions such as the Bridewell were created throughout Europe in the mid to late 1500s. These correctional-type institutions housed a wide range of offenders,

from those who disobeyed their parents to those who committed more serious offences like theft, arson, and violent acts (Elrod & Ryder, 1999).

As colonization began in the New World, puritanical views deemed children as inherently sinful and in need of guidance (Binder et al., 2001). Children were viewed as an important resource for labor and it was the community sentiment that stern child-rearing practices and hard work would keep youth off the streets and out of trouble (Elrod & Ryder, 1999). Young men were often put to work in farming while young women were assigned domestic work (Roberts, 2004). Corporal punishment was used in the New World, as in Europe, as a means of discipline. Parents were charged with the responsibility of teaching their children respect and moral values (Roberts, 2004). Capital punishment and banishment were also means of punishment, though rarely employed, for a variety of crimes during the colonial period, including crimes that by today's standards would be considered minor infractions (e.g., cursing parents and being rebellious) (Binder et al., 2001; Elrod & Ryder, 1999).

Creation of Juvenile Courts in the United States

As life in the United States changed due to continued immigration, industrialization, and the formation of larger cities, an increase in juvenile crime occurred (Binder et al., 2001). In response, houses of refuge were established in many major U.S. cities (Elrod & Ryder, 1999; Roberts, 2004). These institutions were built as secure facilities in which the goal was to reform troubled and delinquent youth who were influenced by "poverty, vice, and neglectful families" (Roberts, 2004, p. 131). Houses of refuge were created by reformers who realized that, though juvenile crime fell under criminal court jurisdiction, the incarceration of youth was not sufficient in transforming

them into productive adults. Youths were committed to these institutions without court appearances by constables or parents. However, these juvenile facilities soon became criticized for their prison-like treatment and actual lack of reform. Thereafter, states began to take on the responsibility for operating these facilities (Snyder & Sickmund, 1996). Even with governmental interventions, the number and diversity of youth housed made it difficult to treat, rehabilitate, and transform them into productive members of society.

Attitudes towards juvenile crime changed again during the end of the 19th Century. The Puritanical views of innate malfeasance changed to ideals that children are innately good and simply need to be molded (Binder et al., 2001). Reformers called “child savers” viewed adolescence as a difficult period of development in which youth were seen as easily misguided by negative influences (Elrod & Ryder, 1999). These reformers called for increased governmental controls of wayward juveniles in situations in which parenting skills seemed to be lacking (Elrod & Ryder, 1999). Juvenile crime was viewed as a product of environment and “insufficient exposure to the guidance of loving adults” (Binder et al., 2001).

In response, the first juvenile court was established in Illinois by the Juvenile Court Act of 1899 (Snyder & Sickmund, 1996). The juvenile courts of the United States were established upon precedence from the 1772 English court case, *Eyre v. Shaftsbury*, the principle of *parens patriae* evolved from this case (Roberts, 2004). The principle of *parens patriae* enables the court to act in lieu of parents and serve the welfare of a child when parents are unwilling or unable to care for them appropriately (Roberts, 2004). The Earl of Shaftsbury had written in his will that he wanted the care of his son to not be

entrusted to his wife, the Countess of Shaftsbury (whom he viewed as unfit), but rather a third party who would be responsible for rearing the child. Under order of the crown, a chancellor (who was a friend of the Earl) was awarded trust of the juvenile son (Roberts, 2004; Williams, 1826). Under *parens patriae*, the state takes on the responsibility of acting in the best interest of the child, as the child is not yet of “full legal capacity” to make such choices (Snyder & Sickmond, 2006, p. 94).

During the first half of the 20th Century, juvenile courts were opened throughout the United States. These juvenile courts continued to follow the doctrine of *parens patriae* in which judges decided the outcome of cases based on the “best interest of the child.” Because the focus of *parens patriae* was on a child’s welfare, a wayward or delinquent child was also “seen as in need of the court’s benevolent intervention” (Snyder & Sickmond, 2006, p. 94). Juvenile courts were procedurally different from the adult criminal courts in that they did not include due process protections for youth (Snyder & Sickmund, 1996). The effort to keep juvenile courts informal was hampered by the lack of due process procedures (Binder et al., 2001). It was not until the 1950s and 1960s that a more formalized process was established in the juvenile court system. A series of landmark Supreme Court decisions established due process protections for juveniles. In *Kent v. United States* (1966), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that juveniles must be provided due process protections prior to being transferred to adult courts for criminal offenses. The Supreme Court in *In re Gault* (1967) and *In re Winship* (1970) established the need for fundamental due process procedures during court proceedings and addressed the need for proof beyond a reasonable doubt, respectively, within the juvenile justice system.

Further efforts to protect and treat juvenile offenders continued in the 1970s. Due to increased concerns regarding deplorable and abusive conditions for juveniles in adult jails, several studies were conducted (Binder et al., 2001). Some facilities were found to be unsafe by failing to meet minimum standards of maintenance and cleanliness. Juveniles in these jails did not receive physical and mental health care, and there were instances in which they were beaten, raped and even sometimes killed by adult inmates or guards (Binder et al., 2001). In 1974 the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) was passed with provisions to reduce juvenile incarceration and remove juveniles from adult jails (Binder et al., 2001; Roberts, 2004). Community based programming, probation, and diversion programs became a highlight of the juvenile justice system mission in an effort to reduce juvenile incarceration (Snyder & Sickmund, 1996). The JJDPA of 1974 did not entirely remove juveniles from adult jails, but stated that if incarceration in adult facilities was necessary, juveniles are to be housed separately from adult counterparts (Binder et al., 2001; Roberts, 2004). Later, in 1980, an amendment to this Act was established that provided federal money to states that required separate juvenile facilities for young offenders, with the exception of those being tried as adults for certain felonious crimes (Binder et al., 2001; Roberts, 2004).

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (1974) also called for the deinstitutionalization of status offenders. This meant that juveniles would no longer be held in detention centers for status offenses (Binder et al., 2001; Roberts, 2004; Snyder & Sickmund, 1996). Status offenses are violations of state juvenile codes that would not be considered unlawful if committed by an adult (e.g., running away, truancy, incorrigibility, and curfew violations) (Roberts, 2004). As with many trends throughout

the field of criminal justice, there was soon a shift in community sentiment toward juvenile offenders based on public perceptions of crime rates.

In the 1980s, violent juvenile crime rates were rising, partially based on the increase in illegal drug markets and the use of youth in this trade (Greenwood, 2004). The increasing crime rates alarmed the general public who then called out for tougher penalties for juvenile offenders. The juvenile justice system was seen as soft on youth, creating a pendulum swing for more offenses to be waived to the adult courts (Snyder & Sickmund, 1996). Increased incarceration and high recidivism rates frequently occur when the focus of crime control is strictly based upon “tough on crime” policies. This leads to higher cost of crime control and less rehabilitation. In the mid 1990s the juvenile crime rate began to decrease (Greenwood, 2004), leading to yet further reformation in the system.

During the mid to late 1990s, the trend became to abandon punitive approaches in favor of restorative and balanced justice approaches. The purpose of these approaches was to balance the punishment of the offender with restoring the victim and community to how they were prior to the crime being committed. Juveniles are held accountable for their actions and are encouraged to make amends to their victims and the community by becoming involved in community-based programs and services (Bazemore & Day, 1996). Today, it seems the balanced and restorative approaches toward juvenile justice have continued; and now also include a theme of therapeutic jurisprudence. Therapeutic jurisprudence is a perspective in which lawmakers reflect upon the current practices in the justice system and determine if they are helpful and just, and do not cause further harm (Wexler & Winick, 1996; Winick, 2008). Under this perspective, the underlying

causes of juvenile crime are being studied and addressed throughout the system. This is evidenced by the increase in specialized court programs such as drug courts, mental health courts, and sexual offender units and also an increase in collaboration with other public service agencies. By utilizing the principles of therapeutic jurisprudence, restorative and balanced approaches to juvenile crime attempt to solve the issues and needs of juveniles that lead to offending, as well as the needs of victims and the community as a result of crime.

One major theoretical perspective for explaining crime has been through the analysis of strain theory. For nearly a century social scientists and criminologists have used an analysis of strain theory to explain criminal behavior (Agnew, 1992, 2001; Baron, 2008; Hay, 2003; Merton, 1938). Early theorists such as Merton (1938) explained strain theory on the basis of blocked opportunities. This means that opportunities to achieve success and desirable outcomes in life are not distributed evenly throughout society. Those who feel they are “blocked” from these opportunities feel “strain” or pressure. It is due to this strain that “certain people in society engage in non-conformist...conduct” (Merton, 1938, p. 672) such as crime and delinquency. More recently theorist Robert Agnew (2001) has used strain theory to analyze delinquency by attributing negative life experiences and the related emotional reactions as leading to criminal activity. Agnew’s approach has been said to be more aptly used to explain juvenile justice than other interpretations of the theory (Hay, 2003). According to Agnew (2001), strains or experiences that threaten core goals, values, or needs may likely lead to criminal-type behavior.

One study took Agnew's views of strain theory and applied it to gender and delinquency, in order to explain the gap between male and female rates (Hay, 2003). The study surveyed 182 inner-city, high school youth in a major U.S. southwest city. The study found that males are more prone to delinquent behavior because of the types of strain they incur. The study reviewed three reasons for higher rates of male delinquency with respect to family related strain. Research indicated that males are subject to different types of family strain (e.g., they are more frequently physically disciplined), they have different emotional responses to strain (e.g., they are more aggressive), and the combination of strain and an emotional response, typically anger, makes them more likely to become delinquent due to reduced social controls (Hay, 2003). Thus, the use of strain theory is not only used to explain causes for delinquency but also how gender may play a role in those causes.

Though the aforementioned study focuses on gender and the male prevalence for delinquency, it seems that strain theory may be just as effectively applied to female delinquency. Instead of explaining the gender gap in delinquency, it can be applied to the type of offenses that females commit as opposed to males. It is the complex feelings toward strains that cause a person to react in a non-conformist manner (Baron, 2008). This means that it is not simply a negative experience in a person's life that leads to delinquency but rather how that person feels about all of the factors associated with that experience, including the severity and duration of the strain. It is at this point that one weighs the strain against the cost of delinquency (Agnew, 2001). For example, this thesis describes female juvenile offenders as typically status or low level offenders (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Humphrey, 2004; Lederman & Brown,

2004; 2004; Miazad, 2002; Mullis et al., 2004; Sherman, 2005). Additionally, these females are often victims of abuse or negative relational experiences (Acoca, 1999; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Humphrey, 2004; Leve & Chamberlain, 2004; Miazad, 2002; Mullis et al., 2004; Sherman, 2005; Welch, Roberts-Lewis, & Parker, 2009). Therefore, if a female juvenile has been exposed to the strain and experience of an abusive or neglectful home life and has endured this strain for an extended duration, they may feel that their opportunity to survive in such an environment has been “blocked”. Their emotional reaction may be to weigh the continued victimization with the consequences of running away and attempting to survive on the streets, even if by delinquent means (Agnew et al., 2001). Thus for females, the blocked opportunity to survive at home may lead them to attempt to survive elsewhere, on their own. Whereas for males, the blocked opportunities for successful or positive home lives may lead them to react violently, causing more severe delinquency patterns.

Female Juvenile Offenders

Much like the development of the juvenile justice system, the involvement of females within it has undergone many changes (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Hartwig & Myers, 2003; Humphrey, 2004; Lederman & Brown, 2004; Mullis et al., 2004). The type and frequency of offenses female juveniles commit have changed since the early 1900s. These changes have led to a focus on female juvenile offenders specifically, in order to determine the underlying reasons for their offending. Some contributing factors that have been identified include abuse and home environments, lack of community and educational connectedness, and physical and mental health issues (Acoca, 1999; Humphrey, 2004; Sherman, 2005). For some young women, the problems they are faced with in their lives may be single incidents; for others the problems may be multiple and recurring.

Female Participation in the Juvenile Justice System

During the early 1900s, females most commonly entered the juvenile justice system for violating social norms by staying out during late night hours, running away, or acting promiscuously (Hartwig & Myers, 2003; Lederman & Brown, 2004). These behaviors were acceptable for young males but deviant and immoral for young females. Young females who were found to be involved in risky or lewd acts were detained in order to protect their virtue (Lederman & Brown, 2004). Since, the crimes for which female juvenile offenders are arrested have become more severe.

Today, young females are still distinguishable from young males in the juvenile justice system because they are most commonly arrested and sometimes detained for status offenses such as running away, incorrigibility, truancy, and violating curfew

(Humphrey, 2004; Mullis, Cornille, Mullis, & Huber, 2004). In addition, females are arrested more often than males on technical probation violations or contempt citations that reclassify them from status offenders to delinquents (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Miazad, 2002; Sherman, 2005). This reclassification process is called “bootstrapping” (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004). In response to the deinstitutionalization of status offenders in 1974, the development of the Valid Court Order Amendment (1980) increased the use of these probation violations, legally allowing “bootstrapping” (Humphrey, 2004; Miazad, 2002). The deinstitutionalization forbade judges from detaining juveniles who have only committed status offenses. Yet, the practice of “bootstrapping” was a way for judges to charge delinquents with additional violations that would in effect allow them to be detained (Humphrey, 2004). This was a means for the courts to again protect female juvenile offenders from unacceptable or risky behaviors.

Legal Issues for Females

Though female juvenile offenders are still arrested less frequently than males, the arrest rates for females are increasing faster than those of their male counterparts (Biden, 2003). Over the last two decades, juvenile crime rates have seen an overall decline-- yet for females the rates have increased 92% from 1985-2002 (Marks, 1999; Miazad, 2002; Shepard, 2002; Snyder & Sickmond, 2006). In 2000, 28% of the 2.4 million youth arrested under the age of eighteen were female (Biden, 2003). During the 1990s, the number of female juvenile offenders increased 50% in admissions to detention facilities compared to only a 4% increase for males (Sickmund, Sladky, & Kang, 2004). Even more concerning is that the age at which females commit their first delinquent act (12-14

years of age) is steadily decreasing, and their crimes are becoming more severe (Guerrieri, 2008; Mullis et al., 2004).

In some states, young women account for 70% of youth detained for status offenses (Sherman, 2005). In 1999, females accounted for 26% of overall juvenile offenders (Marks, 1999). This number increased to 29% by 2002, yet most arrests continued to involve more minor offenses such as running away and prostitution, which is also traditionally associated with females (Mullis et al., 2004; Sherman, 2005). These crimes are not independent; often young women commit multiple crimes. For some, it is running away that leads to prostitution and property offenses as a means of survival (Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Humphrey, 2004; Ledermen & Brown, 2004). Arrests for property crimes and minor assault charges have increased slightly among young women (Sherman, 2005). Also, according to one report in 2002, female juveniles accounted for 24% of aggravated assaults, 32% of other types of assaults, in addition to 31% of curfew and loitering offenses, and 60% of runaway charges for all juvenile offenders (Snyder, 2004). Though females are still predominantly status offenders, the rise in more serious delinquent charges supports the need for systematic changes in how they are dealt with and treated by the juvenile justice system.

Female Family Dynamics

Family dynamics may play a large role in determining whether or not a young woman becomes delinquent (Welch, Roberts-Lewis, & Parker, 2009). Female delinquents may be subject to abuse or traumatic experiences within their homes that lead to difficulties, or they may have negative role models. The negative influences for these delinquents could be parents, siblings, or other family members.

Many female juvenile offenders experience physical and sexual victimization at home. Some young women have reported running away from home due to personal violations that are not necessarily defined as sexual abuse and therefore may not garner protection from authorities (Lederman & Brown, 2004). These situations include acts of voyeurism, inappropriate touching, or exhibitionism committed by a mother's boyfriend or other relative (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Lederman & Brown, 2004). Interviews conducted with female juvenile offenders revealed that the median age for first experiencing victimization of sexual assault is thirteen (Acoca, 1999). A review of case files on female juvenile offenders showed the majority of those arrested for assault were actually victims of domestic violence and acting in self-defense (Acoca, 1999). It is these types of victimization that may cause young women to leave home without permission, become truant from school, and initiate drug use or other forms of delinquency.

Even for those who may not experience physical or sexual abuse, a negative home life may lead to delinquency. Stress and chaos are common familial experiences of female juvenile offenders (Sherman, 2005). Females under these conditions may run away or commit other offenses as an avoidance tactic. Once they are arrested and detained, the instability and family stress may increase. For some parents who are strict or controlling, the juvenile's detainment may only increase family conflict. Other parents who are emotionally detached may become even more distant or give up on the juvenile. Some experts suggest that when female juvenile offenders and their parents are at the outer ends of this spectrum, either highly conflictive or "extremely emotionally disengaged," the young women are more vulnerable to influences of deviant peers (Miazad, 2002; Mullis et al., 2004). Additionally, 70% of female juvenile offenders are

reported to be from non-intact homes (i.e., living with only one parent) or an out of home placement. Many of these females also have witnessed violence between parents or caretakers (Marks, 1999). Without a stable home life, they may choose to run away in order to seek out fulfilling relationships.

Finally, parents may be poor role models or have poor parenting skills; this too can lead to female delinquency (Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Leve & Chamberlain, 2004; Mullis et al., 2004). Parents may be too strict and punitive, causing young women to feel trapped and feel the need to escape. On the other hand, parents may themselves be involved in crime, increasing the risk of female juvenile delinquency (Flanagan & Duval, 2002; Leve & Chamberlain, 2004). A research study conducted on female juvenile offenders created a family profile (Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995). This study found that, of those interviewed, 63% of the young women had lived at home prior to their incarceration while the other 37% lived with either extended family members or friends, or had been placed in foster care. Fifty-eight percent reported that they had siblings who had been previously involved in criminal activities. Again, 58% reported having problems with relationships specific to maternal bonding. Other problem dynamics discussed were their “mothers’ troubles with men, parent’s usage of drugs and alcohol, and feeling like family members had given up on them” (Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995). The unfortunate instances of familial disengagement and emotional neglect have been made worse by the lack of visits by family members for female juvenile offenders who are detained (Ledermen & Brown, 2004).

As this review indicates, many aspects of family dynamics are related to delinquency. Abuse, a neglectful home life, and poor parenting all contribute to

determining whether a young woman will become delinquent. These risk factors also indirectly affect a young woman's physical and mental health, as discussed next.

Female Physical and Mental Health

Female juvenile offenders frequently suffer from physical and/or mental health issues, which are related to delinquency. One study indicated that 88% of detained female offenders suffered from physical health issues while 53% needed psychological services (Acoca, 1999). The relationship between health issues and delinquency is somewhat complex and involves drug use and various other health concerns. These young women may lack the knowhow or means to take care of themselves physically. They may also engage in self-destructive behaviors as a way to cope with emotions or as a means for survival (Acoca, 1999; Humphrey, 2004; Miazad, 2002; Welch et al., 2009). Key risk factors for female juvenile offenders, and deteriorated health, have been identified by researchers from various fields; these risk factors include family dysfunction, histories of abuse, mental health and substance abuse issues, high-risk behaviors, problems in school, and negative peer associations (Hartwig & Myers, 2003; Lederman & Brown, 2004).

Physical and sexual abuses are overwhelmingly common factors amongst female juvenile offenders, and can lead to both delinquency and declining health (Acoca, 1999; Leve & Chamberlain, 2004; Martin et al., 2008; Miazad, 2002; Sherman, 2005). In a Japanese study, 54.7% of juvenile female offenders experienced sexual abuse, while 45.3% were victims of violence (Ariga, Uehara, Takeuchi, Inshige, Nakano, & Mikuni, 2008). Statistics from the United States show that 85% of female juvenile offenders have been victims of physical abuse and 61% have been victims of sexual abuse (Martin,

Martin, Dell, Davis, & Guerrieri, 2008). In the United States, females in the justice system are three times more likely to have experienced sexual abuse than males in the system (Beyer, Blair, Katz, Simkins, & Steinberg, 2003). Female juveniles tend to internalize their relational issues (e.g., abuse) and other problems that place them at a heightened risk for delinquency. It is when they are able to externalize their responses that they tend to become aggressive; this often leads to more serious criminal offenses (Sherman, 2005).

When these young women feel they have no way out of abusive situations, they often use poor judgment to avoid them. They skip classes in school to avoid interference from teachers and counselors. They run away from home to circumvent further abuse. They begin to use drugs and alcohol as a means of emotional escape. And they begin to associate with other delinquents whom they feel may understand their plight. These choices may lead them into further, more severe criminal activity (e.g., prostitution) in order to survive in their new life while avoiding the realities of abuse and neglect at home (Acoca, 1999; Humphrey, 2004). Consequently, they may become depressed and initiate self-mutilation, thereby adding to negative health problems (Sherman, 2005).

Studying the relationship between health issues and delinquency is complicated. In some instances, physical and mental health problems may lead to delinquency, and in others the relationship is reversed: delinquency may instead lead to physical and mental health problems (Welch et al., 2009). A prime example is the relationship between drug use and delinquency. For instance, drug usage leads to obvious deficiencies in both physical and mental health. At the same time trauma, depression, and poor coping skills often lead to drug use, which in turn may lead to further delinquent measures in order to

continue to obtain drugs. Young women are typically susceptible to peer pressure to use drugs (Morgan & Patton, 2002). Drug use among females is a serious concern with both legal and health consequences. A study of female juvenile offenders reports that 75% regularly used drugs and alcohol and the onset age was typically fourteen (Acoca, 1999). A regrettable consequence for young women specifically with regards to drug use is that they are physiologically more prone to abuse or dependency than young men (Welch et al., 2009).

In addition to drug use, young women often suffer from a variety of other health problems. Female juvenile offenders' tendency to internalize problems may result in severe physical health consequences. Researchers who conducted a survey of girls in Oregon found that one of every 12 females reported having an eating disorder (Morgan & Patton, 2002). Another common physical outlet for female juvenile offenders is self-mutilation (Humphrey, 2004). Further, young women who run away are particularly likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors (Leve & Chamberlain, 2004). An unfortunate consequence for many of these young women is unwanted pregnancy (Miazad, 2002). Some female juvenile offenders are either already mothers or pregnant (Biden, 2003). One study found that 29% of female juvenile offenders had been pregnant one or more times (Acoca, 1999). It is young women in this situation who have thus far perpetuated the cycle of intergenerational delinquency, assisted by the lack of systemic support. Being a teenage mother may only add to the stressors that culminated in their delinquency and increase their risk for certain mental health disorders.

Moreover, female juvenile offenders disproportionately suffer from traumatic, psychologically damaging experiences that may account for their increased involvement

in delinquent behaviors (Frabutt et al., 2008; Martin et al., 2008). In the Japanese study, 76.5% of female juvenile offenders had experienced some sort of traumatic event (Ariga et al., 2008). Research consistently shows that most of these traumatic issues for young women stem from deficiencies in their relationships with family, friends, and other influential community members (Acoca, 1999; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Hawkins, Graham, Williams, & Zahn, 2009; Sherman, 2005; Welch et al., 2009). However, many situations can be viewed as traumatic by juveniles and contribute to deterioration in their mental health. Some research revealed that of the female juvenile offenders interviewed, 95% lacked stability in their home life and 54% of their mothers and 46% of their fathers had been arrested or incarcerated (Acoca, 1999). Another survey found that one in five female juvenile offenders had a parent who was deceased (Sherman, 2005). As a direct result of these traumatic experiences, some young women find themselves involved with the juvenile justice system. This system has traditionally punished them without concern for their situations and often has sent them back to the poor living situation they were attempting to escape (Humphrey, 2004). This suggests that these young women who may be victims of unfortunate circumstance are being re-traumatized by a system that punishes them for reacting to their distress.

Female juvenile offenders are typically viewed as experiencing some type of mental health disorder because of their outward show of emotions (Hartwig & Myers, 2003). Female offenders are disproportionately pathologized and diagnosed with conduct disorders, instead of their behaviors being interpreted as a possible reaction to abuse or a coping mechanism for some other traumatic experience (Hartwig & Myers, 2003). However, studies do show that young women experience mental health issues at

significantly high rates (Cruise, Marsee, Dandreaux, & De Prato, 2007). Eighty-four percent of female juvenile offenders report mental health symptoms (Martin et al., 2008). Female offenders suffer from high rates of depression and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Frabutt et al.; Sherman, 2005). Within the U.S., females are 50% more likely than their male counterparts to suffer from depression (Morgan & Patton, 2002). The Japanese study mentioned above indicates that female juvenile offenders diagnosed with PTSD often suffer from co-morbid psychiatric disorders such as panic disorder, suicidal tendencies, anxiety disorders, and psychotic disorder (Ariga et al., 2008; Cruise et al., 2007). One expert has found that of the female juvenile offenders she had interviewed, 24% had seriously considered suicide and 21% had been hospitalized at least once for a psychiatric disorder (Acoca, 1999). These high rates of pathology among female juvenile offenders may be attributable to exposure to traumatic experiences at young ages and insufficient coping skills.

Drug use, survival mechanisms, and physical and mental health problems can all be contributing and related factors to female juvenile delinquency. It may be difficult to ascertain at times whether delinquency or the related issues come first for these young women, but all are strong indicators of problems that need to be holistically addressed. In addition to familial and personal issues that may lead to delinquency and health problems, relationships at school and within the community may effect behavior.

Female School and Community Relations

School attachments and relationships play an important role in the lives of female offenders (Biden, 2003). For some young women, school may be the one place where they can escape traumatizing experiences in their home environments. Unfortunately,

there are several types of difficulties that young women may experience in school, including poor performance and conflicts with other students or staff. When these young women under-perform in school or are further exposed to negative relationships, they are left at risk to be influenced by a “deviant peer culture” (Mullis et al., 2004). These problems may contribute to delinquency.

Female juvenile offenders frequently have undiagnosed special needs in education such as behavioral disorders, learning disabilities, or slower learning capabilities (Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Sherman, 2005). One early study conducted with female juvenile offenders reflected repeated school failures and unrealistic ideations about their academic skill levels (Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995). Discouragement about school failures and disengagement from positive school relationships can lead to antisocial and delinquent behaviors (Biden, 2003).

Besides the educational conflicts in school, other issues often lead to truancy and other forms of delinquency. Female juvenile offenders interviewed by Acoca (1999) described school as “a battleground” for other traumatic experiences. They reported being victims of sexual harrasment, racism, and interpersonal rivalries (Acoca, 1999). For these young women, school becomes just another place where they feel alienated and unsupported, a place they need to avoid in order to survive, consequently they miss certain classes or drop out all together.

Along with school related risk factors associated with delinquency, influences throughout the community may shape behaviors for young women. For example, information provided by community service agencies may send mixed messages for females at risk of delinquency (Ledermen & Brown, 2004). Women who are involved in

abuse situations are regularly urged to leave and seek help by whatever means. Communities even offer safe shelters that provide these women with a place to escape. However, when female juveniles attempt to escape the victimization of abuse by running away, they are usually deemed to be unmanageable and are punished (Biden, 2003; Ledermen & Brown, 2004). Community services may be lacking or simply less advertised for female juveniles. Community agencies and authorities treat juvenile female offenders as in need of controlling rather than in need of assistance. This perception that female juvenile offenders need to be overseen and their behaviors managed has also been a focus of the juvenile justice system.

Effects of the Juvenile Justice System upon Young Women

Though efforts have begun to modify the juvenile justice system to better address the needs of young women, the practices throughout the system have inadvertently played a role in the continued delinquency of female juvenile offenders. Many of these unconscious practices that further female delinquency occur due to the act of being detained, and the treatment within detention facilities (Beyer et al., 2003; Biden, 2003; Hartwig & Myers, 2003; Humphrey, 2004; Miazad, 2002; Sherman, 2005).

Even though status offenders (e.g., a minor who is a runaway, incorrigible, in need of supervision) were long ago deinstitutionalized, female juveniles may still find themselves detained for such offenses. This is because the system is trying to keep them from unsafe homes for their “protection” (Biden, 2003). This is another form of systematic “bootstrapping.” Unfortunately, this approach often does not lead to treatment or change in the factors that are creating an unsafe home; it only delays the inevitable return to it. This can result in continued trauma and alienation from family, system staff, and authority (Beyer et al., 2003; Biden, 2003; Humphrey, 2004). Punitive responses to young women who feel they have been traumatized will likely only exacerbate physical and psychological stress and perpetuate the cycle of acting out (Beyer et al., 2003). It is this continued paternalistic view towards female offenders that contributes to the growing numbers of these detainees (Miazad, 2002).

The practices within many juvenile detention facilities also lead to further problems for female offenders. Many of these facilities have been designed to meet the needs of the traditional male offender, creating less opportunity for female rehabilitation (Ledermen & Brown, 2004; Miazad, 2002). Practices and procedures within the facilities

encourage or even insist upon the suppression of feelings as a means of behavioral compliance. Female offenders are expected to assume a stereotypical, feminine role of being passive and submissive (Hartwig & Myers, 2003). Consequently, female juvenile offenders may not be able to confront or deal appropriately with the issues that they face and thereby continue to act out as a means of coping (Hartwig & Myers, 2003). Young women who may not be compliant with typical detention standards may face the possibility of additional trauma by being placed in isolation or restraints in order to coerce obedience (Sherman, 2005).

As well, female juvenile offenders who spend time in detention centers or other facilities may develop relationships with other detainees that will simply add to the negative influences of these young women (Sherman, 2005). Additionally, for some, family relational issues are further destroyed by the lack of visitation and bonding with family members and for some, their own children (Flanagan & Duval, 2002). One study revealed that 83% of the female juvenile offenders interviewed, who were also mothers, had been separated from their infants within the first three months of their babies' lives, and 54% had not had even a single visit with their children while in detention (Acoca, 1999). Those who find themselves in placement or detention for long periods of time could face further risk of losing their children permanently due to the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. This legislation, in short, imposes guidelines for parents to demonstrate stability for their children within one year or they are subject to loss of custody (Acoca, 1999). This is not to say that the system practices and procedures are intended to re-traumatize or increase the burden on female juvenile offenders, just that the traditional, male-oriented standards do not meet their gender-specific needs.

Female Juvenile Justice and Critical Theory Perspective

Critical theory is a perspective that has been adapted by many philosophers from its origins in the Frankfurt School in Germany (Bohman, 2005). It is a theory used by social scientists to combine both explanation and understanding of phenomena (Bohman, 2005). The idea is that an issue is looked at critically with a goal of effecting change (Agger, 1998).

Under the lens of a critical theory perspective, professionals in the field of juvenile justice should continue to investigate the problems within the system that work to perpetuate female juvenile offending. As prescribed by critical theory, these issues should be investigated as a means of making future changes (Agger, 1998). The systematic deficiencies are becoming more recognized. With the need for gender-specific programming becoming increasingly apparent, more and more facilities are making necessary changes to come into compliance with the new standards. Juvenile justice professionals, courts, schools and other social agencies are taking on an approach based on the tenets of therapeutic jurisprudence by studying and attempting to address the needs specific to juvenile female offenders.

Justice and Treatment of Female Juvenile Offenders

Therapeutic jurisprudence is “the study of the role of the law as a therapeutic agent” (Wexler & Winick, 1996). Therapeutic jurisprudence is a perspective that professionals and lawmakers use to evaluate laws and determine whether the outcomes are positive and just. Therapeutic jurisprudence suggests that juvenile justice practitioners should consider whether the treatment of and sanctions for female juvenile offenders are addressing the underlying causes of delinquency or simply making matters worse (Wexler & Winick, 1996). When practitioners use Therapeutic Jurisprudence, they assess the therapeutic and counter-therapeutic consequences of legal decisions (Winick, 2008). Within the field of juvenile justice, therapeutic jurisprudence suggests that practitioners consider due process of legal proceedings, and the emotional and psychological wellbeing of offenders (Roberts, 2004).

The use of therapeutic jurisprudence principles may increase the perceived legitimacy of the juvenile justice system in the opinion of young women at risk for initiating or continuing delinquent behavior. Legitimacy is the belief that an authority makes fair and reasonable rules and consequences; as a result, people adhere to these rules willingly (Tyler, 2006). In this view, if these young women feel they are being treated fairly they may be more likely to respect authority and the rule of law. For example, it is possible that if female offenders feel their history of victimization, lack of positive relationships, and wellbeing is considered in their disposition within the juvenile justice system, they will be more likely to accept consequences and services. Ideally, they will be more likely to conform to social standards and refrain from delinquency.

The concepts of therapeutic jurisprudence and legitimacy can be related to the approaches of balanced and restorative justice. Under these approaches, authorities realize that victims, offenders, and the community are all stakeholders in delinquency and the harms caused by it (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007). The victim and the community have been harmed by delinquency and need to be restored. The offender must take an active role in this restoration. In turn, professionals and community leaders must work to find solutions for issues that cause delinquency. Juvenile justice professionals investigate matters of delinquency from the view of each stakeholder and determine the needs of each (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007). For example, a female juvenile may run away from home due to persistent abuse. In an effort to survive on her own and quell the pain, she may become involved in drugs and prostitution. She herself is a victim, as is the community as a whole. She must be held accountable for her offenses through the juvenile justice system, programming, and community service, which in turn works to restore the community. It is the job of the juvenile justice system and other community agencies to intervene and offer services to stop the abuse that led to her offending, and educate the juvenile on the dangers she poses to herself and others.

In this situation, the juvenile justice system attempts to restore the victim, community, and offender to the state they were in prior to the offense and victimization, thereby following the restorative and balanced approaches. Court dispositions and services offered under the perspective of therapeutic jurisprudence attempt to address and resolve the underlying causes of the initial delinquency. In doing so, the female juvenile may see that an interest has been taken in her problems, that help is being offered, and she may choose to refrain from future delinquency patterns. For female juvenile

offenders, the interest given to their problems may indirectly affect perceived legitimacy in the system by realizing the harms their offenses bring about, and being offered services for the underlying causes of their actions. Thus the combined use of therapeutic jurisprudence and restorative and balanced approaches to justice may lead to a decrease in future offending. One way this can be done is with the use of gender-specific programming.

Gender-Specific Programming

Because so much research has identified the specific risks and needs of young women involved in the juvenile justice system, many programs nationwide have been developed. Studies have shown that gender-specific approaches should take place in the least restrictive environments available for female juvenile offenders, and these offenders should also be close to their families in order to facilitate meaningful changes in social relationships (Shepard, 2002). By definition, least restrictive environments are those in which placement or detention is for a minimal amount of time necessary only to address underlying issues, and that it takes place in offenders' own communities where they are close to family and support (Miazad, 2002). Much of the available programming for female juvenile offenders is also holistic (i.e., considering all aspects of the young women's lives). For example the juvenile probation department in San Francisco, California collaborates with the United Way, which in turn makes referrals to up to 14 different community programs based on assessments. These referrals for services take the special needs of female juvenile offenders in to consideration (Sherman, 2005). Most programs that have been developed across the country focus on the results of young women's individual assessments and the needs described therein. The programs are "strengths based," meaning that, instead of paying attention to only their deficiencies (in education, etc.), professionals also work to discover what the young women are good at and capitalize upon these strengths (Sherman, 2005). Models that have worked best for female juvenile offenders include structure that facilitate the building of relationships, provide time to process feelings, and work through individual issues with caring, positive adults and peers (Morgan & Patton, 2002).

One gender-specific program that attempts to use a multi-level risk model in order to evaluate issues for female juvenile offenders is the Holistic Enrichment for At-Risk Teens (HEART) program for incarcerated females in North Carolina (Welch et al., 2009). This program targets young women between the ages of 14 and 18 who enter the juvenile justice system with substance abuse or dependency issues along with a co-occurring mental health disorder. These young women are treated in a separate, modified therapeutic community within a correctional facility. They receive individual and family counseling services, classes on how to effectively communicate, anger management, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and educational assistance. The counseling and classes are specific to young women with regard to how they interpret and cope with relationships, how they internalize trauma, and how to make adjustments that are socially responsible (Welch et al., 2009).

Several similar facilities and programs have been developed nationwide with similar curricula and goals, all focusing on the needs of young women. Some of the programs are data-driven (meaning they are established based on positive and significant research findings), and some of them are not. For example, a data-driven program adopted by centers throughout Florida, PACE (Practical Academic Cultural Education) Centers for Girls, showed that young women who participated in their services had lower recidivism rates than those who did not. As well, the outcome measures from 2000 to 2001 showed a 19.1% drop in the number of females who ran away from home after participating in the program (Sherman, 2005). Fortunately, these programs are being developed with consideration of the differences between female and male juvenile offenders, and the specific needs of female juvenile offenders.

Another, more broad reaching type of programming that has been developed is a course that is used in after-school programs, community centers, and detention facilities, called Girls Circle (Roa, Irvine, & Cervantez, 2007). Facilitators of the program run courses in facilities nationwide. The curriculum consists of informal group meetings in which the topics are all related to being a young woman. These support groups serve females aged 10 to 18 and discuss topics including being a young woman, friendship, body image, expressing individuality, peer relationships, and paths to the future. The program is a strengths-based with a mission to enhance the positive aspects of young women's lives and help them learn how to cope with the negative (Roa et al., 2007). This curriculum is presented to female juveniles in many settings with the goal of preventing as well as intervening in offending behaviors.

Additionally, a short-term residential program in Nevada, The McGee Center Girls' Program, uses curriculum from gender-specific concepts to address the needs of young women. On an individual basis, the program works toward goals of family reunification and strengthening relationships at home, in school, and within the community. Psychological and substance abuse evaluations are conducted to determine if such services may be needed. Individual and family counseling is initiated and case plans are developed in order to focus on educational needs and credit retrieval in order to catch up on credits they may be lacking due to course failures or truancy (Washoe County Department of Juvenile Services, 2008). The focus of this program is to address the needs of young women by creating positive relationships, role-modeling, and facilitating family rehabilitation (Washoe County Department of Juvenile Services, 2008). Young women learn skills by participating in classes such as Family Wellness,

Resolving Anger Peacefully, Aggression Replacement Training, Thinking for a Change, and Girls Circle “to make better decisions that can positively impact their present and future lives” (Washoe County, Nevada, 2009). This program also works closely with a community non-profit agency that provides individual and family counseling as well as community service groups in order to regain connectedness with the family and community (Washoe County, Nevada, 2009). Because this program and the classes are exclusive to young women, they are instilled with a sense of empowerment and are taught to express themselves with others who are like them.

The aforementioned programs and others like them seem to relate to the goals of restorative and balanced approaches to juvenile justice. This is done by providing the juvenile justice system with court dispositions for placing female juvenile offenders into programs in order to fulfill mandated consequences and hold them accountable for wrongdoings. These female juveniles are diverted from continued offending and educated about the harms of their offenses, in effect restoring the community and victims.

Under the perspective of therapeutic jurisprudence, by participating in the programming, the goal is to rehabilitate offenders by addressing their needs and creating pathways to success. The idea is to make juveniles believe that the system is legitimate, refrain from delinquency, and learn proper ways to cope with the stressors in their lives. In order for the juvenile justice system to be effective in these efforts, it is important for professionals and policy makers to be able to understand and predict the factors that lead to delinquency. A fundamental process for determining how and why certain life experiences lead to specific outcomes is by using analysis formed from theoretical interpretations (Binder et al., 2001).

Social Context Theory

The use of theories assist researchers and professionals in interpreting facts and predicting future behaviors (Binder et al., 2001). For instance, data collected and organized can be interpreted, by theory, to determine the “likelihood that certain kinds of persons will become delinquent and that certain social conditions and arrangements will produce certain levels of delinquent activity” (Binder et al., 2001, p. 60). It is with the use of theories that professionals in the field of juvenile justice can develop meaningful policies and programs to counteract predicted delinquent trends.

The theory of social context is used as a model for analyzing behaviors of individuals or groups of individuals (Earle & Earle, 1999). Social context has been defined as the “sociocultural forces that shape day-to-day experiences and directly and indirectly affect health and behavior” (Pasick & Burke, 2008). The sociocultural forces are formed in relation to, and by each other, and often influence people subconsciously (Burke, Joseph, Pasick, & Barker, 2009). Thus, norms are formed for how people should behave in relation to one another and when these norms are violated, behaviors are adapted. A person’s social context and experiences shape the choices that he or she makes and the behaviors exhibited (Burke et al., 2009). Individuals or groups of individuals develop attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors based upon the influences of social structure.

A study in Britain used the model of social context to reveal links in drugs and crime and the areas of prevalence (Seddon, 2006). Part of the research looked at the increase of drug usage in Britain in the 1980s, specifically heroin, and the related increase in crime rates concentrated in impoverished neighborhoods (Seddon, 2006). The purpose

of the research was to make an original contribution to debates in criminological theories. Research revealed that it was not necessarily drug usage that led to crime and resulted in impoverished neighborhoods, though at times this may have been the case. Instead, it was often shown that it was many young, unemployed and semi-criminal residents in communities who chose to actively pursue drug use. The researcher stated that the neighborhoods which exhibited the majority of drugs and crime were already, prior to the 1980s, populated with low income residents (Seddon, 2006). It was theorized that low income led to the social exclusion of these residents. The researcher suggests that the social context of those who were excluded from “ordinary” social activities correlated with the increase of crime and drug usage (Seddon, 2006). Therefore, it was the context of the social exclusion and not necessarily low income itself that led to heightened levels of drug use and criminal activity. These people essentially chose to pursue criminal activities for economic gain and socialization because their sociocultural forces shaped their choices and behaviors.

Social context theory may provide a model for explaining how young women have become involved in the juvenile justice system, as well as for how they may respond to the growing use of gender-specific programming. Gender provides a context for how young women behave (Acoca, 1999; Cruise et al., 2007; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Hartwig & Myers, 2003; Humphrey, 2004; Lederman & Brown, 2004; Sherman, 2005). Gender shapes how relationships are formed and the value placed upon these relationships. For example, the simple characteristic of being a young woman affects the likelihood of being abused (Acoca, 1999; Biden, 2003; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Sherman, 2005), which is associated with entrance into the juvenile justice system. It is

the abuse that shapes a young female's perception of relationships, and in turn may provide the the context for her delinquent behavior.

The social context of gender molds a person's attitudes and beliefs of the world based upon either male or female experiences (Burke et al., 2009; Earle & Earle, 1999; Pasick & Burke, 2008). Therefore, juvenile justice programming that is gender-specific should be influential for female juvenile offenders. Research suggests that instead of adhering to the often-used historical theories of criminal justice as applied generally, other types of theories focused on the social context of why females enter the criminal justice system should be considered when developing female-specific programs (Bloom & Covington, 1998). One study highlighted a debate between feminist theories that stress the equality of females and males, and social contextual or constructionist theories that stress the differences between them (Goodkind, 2005). Goodkind (2005) used these theories to critique the views of what causes female juvenile delinquency. The results of this critique revealed that a complex analysis combining competing theories may best be used in the development of more comprehensive and successful gender-specific programming for female juvenile offenders (Goodkind, 2005). Because gender-specific programming is relevant to the experiences of young women and addresses their specific needs, female juvenile offenders should perceive a positive impact of such programming.

Likely, several theories could be applied to explain and analyze female juvenile offending. However, the use of social context theory seems to relate closely with the stressors that are frequently attributed to increased involvement for female juveniles in the justice system. And because girls tend to react negatively to traumatic life experiences, they seek out alternatives to meet their needs (Agnew, 2001). It is with

these alternative choices in mind and the cause for female juveniles' threat to social context that juvenile justice professionals must adapt preventative and intervening programs.

Overview of the Study

The goals of the juvenile justice system are to control and decrease youth crime as well as reform offenders into healthy, productive members of society (Humphrey, 2004; Miazad, 2002; Sherman, 2005). Research strongly suggests that young women within the juvenile justice system must have specific needs met (e.g., connectedness to family, community and education, treatment for emotional, physical and mental health needs) in order to become successful (Sherman, 2005). The focus of this study is to determine whether or not female offenders perceive the gender-specific approach that has been implemented by Washoe County Department of Juvenile Services McGee Center Girls' Program as positive and helpful.

The purpose of this study was to gather information about the experiences of female juvenile offenders who have participated in a gender-specific, residential program developed to address the underlying needs of young women. This study attempted to discover whether young women can identify parts of the McGee Center Girls' Program that are gender-specific. The study then attempted to identify what females' reactions are to gender-specific programming with regards to their relationships, health, education or other areas of self-improvement, for instance whether the gender-specific programming had a positive impact on these areas. The final purpose of the study was to determine whether females feel their success may have varied if they would have been in a non-gendered program.

It is believed that female juvenile offenders will perceive gender-specific programming as an effective way of receiving services. Specifically, they will be able to identify gender-specific programming; they will attribute their success, at least in part, to

such programming; and they will perceive that programming would be different if males were involved. Social Context Theory states that it is society's perceptions of how particular people should behave and adapt in a given community that shapes an individual's roles within that community (Earle & Earle, 1999). Defined by a model of social context, gender shapes how an individual responds to relationships and community expectations with regards to issues like behavior, education, and health (Burke et al., 2009; Earle & Earle, 1999; Pasick & Burke, 2008). Therefore, with regards to this study, if female juvenile offenders are taught acceptable ways of behaving by forming bonds within the context of the program "community", they will conform to expectations for positive change. If females can recognize that gender-specific programming is focused on female issues and needs they will accept it and use it to help them with their own issues.

This study looked at one specific program for female juvenile offenders in Reno, Nevada (Charles M. McGee Center for Adolescent Programs, 2008). The program is called the Girls' Program and is supervised and managed by the Prevention and Early Intervention Division of the Washoe County Department of Juvenile Services. The program is housed in the department's status offense shelter, the McGee Center, which is off site from the detention facility. The McGee Center Girls' Program offers a 3-6 month residential program for young women, aged 13-17, who are involved in the juvenile justice system. These young women are referred to the program for offenses ranging from status offenses, such as being a runaway or being incorrigible, to criminal charges. Some of the young women enter the program voluntarily and some are court ordered. They live in a home-style environment where they help with chores, receive education,

and attend various classes and counseling. Some of the classes and internal programs are gender-based and specific to young women (e.g., Girls Circle and Girl Scouts). Some of the programs are not at face value gender-specific, but in the terms of this program they are because only females are involved. Parents are encouraged to and required at times to participate in different classes and parts of the Girls' Program (Charles M. McGee Center for Adolescent Programs, 2008).

Methods

Sample

A total of eleven females aged 14-17 who completed the McGee Center Girls' Program, were interviewed for this study. The interviews were conducted during a period of time that ranged from the day the respondent completed the program to two weeks thereafter. The mean age of the respondents was 15.36 years with the median and mode being 16 years of age. The respondents identified themselves as 54.55 % (6 of 11) Latina, and 45.45% (5 of 11) White. They ranged in their level of involvement within the juvenile justice system: 4 of the 11 were assigned to a prevention/early intervention status (meaning they either had no legal referrals but the family had sought out help for issues they were having, or they had been referred to the Washoe County Department of Juvenile Services for a status offense), two were on Informal status (status offender or a possible misdemeanor offense), one was pending court for a misdemeanor offense, and four were on Open Probation status (meaning they were on formal probation for a delinquent offense). The respondents varied in their levels of education, family background, and traumatic experiences.

Procedure

Interviews were conducted over an approximate six month period, on a voluntary basis and at the discretion of the respondents' parents. An information sheet and parental permission form were given to parents and prospective participants explaining the objectives of the study and asking for signed informed consent for participation. Upon obtaining consent for the interview, the participants were informed that they could refuse to answer any question and/or stop the interview at any time. The interviews were

conducted by the primary researcher who is also employed within the program. The interviews were conducted at the McGee Center either in a small interview room or a larger conference room, depending on room availability, and behind a closed door. The interviews took approximately a half an hour. Interviews were recorded by audiocassette, later transcribed to a computer file, and then printed to a paper copy. The respondents were asked to choose a “code name” in order to maintain anonymity. The code name was used for reference during the interview as well as in the coding and analysis of the study. The interviews were semi-structured, employing both structured (specified questions) and unstructured (questions prompted by the flow of the discussion) approaches (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). The respondents were asked a set of specific questions (see Appendix A) that began broadly inquiring about their experiences in the program and how the program may have been helpful with regards to their relationships, health, education, or other aspects of their lives. The questions then became more directed, pertaining to gender-specific programming. The initial four questions were designed to determine whether respondents would offer information about gender-specific programming prior to being asked such questions. The next eight questions were directed toward perceptions of the program being specifically for girls and classes that were taught, and whether they felt these were helpful. The final six questions asked whether females perceived their experiences would have been different if they had been in non-gender-specific programming. Additional questions were asked throughout the interviews in order to probe for further insight or clarification.

Analysis

The analysis of the data that was collected was based upon participants responses to a semi-structured set of interview questions (see Appendix A). Categories were discovered by searching for both similarities and differences of respondents' answers based upon three research questions: Do the respondents remember gender-specific programming? Do respondents think gender-specific programming is helpful? How do respondents feel their experience and success may have varied in a non-gender-specific program? The initial categories that emerged simply answered these research questions. The responses were then further broken down into sub-categories identified and based on response similarities. These similarities were identified by comments that consisted of like phrases and concurring opinions regarding topics extracted from the initial categories. The comments were then tallied in order to report the findings. The coding was based upon the young women's perceived recognition of gender-specific programming and its assistance in their success of the Girls' Program.

Data validation was provided through inter-rater reliability. The primary researcher initiated the coding process and the secondary researcher served as a check on coding procedures. Discussions took place as necessary for the resolution of discrepancies.

Coding was based on compilations of answers to the interview questions. These answers are described as comments. A comment is defined here as a "remark or observation made as an expression of opinion" (Neufeldt & Guralnik, 1988, p. 280) with regards to a particular topic or thought. A comment may be as short as a one word answer to a direct question or as long as several sentences as needed to express opinion.

A comment may also be separated by a follow-up question from the interviewer. In addition, a respondent may have made more than one comment in reference to a particular topic; thus the comment count is higher than the number of respondents.

Results

Data analyses were divided into three themes, each one answering one of the research questions: remembered gender-specific programming, perceived helpfulness of gender-specific programming, and perceptions of whether a non-gendered program would be different. The following results show the three main themes as well as the subcategories that emerged during the analysis process.

Remembered and Recognized Gender-Specific Programming

The first research question was: Do respondents remember gender-specific programming? The first four interview questions asked respondents about aspects of the program without mentioning gender-specific programming expressly. The purpose was to do determine if females would remember such programming without being prompted, The results partially confirmed that gender-specific programming was remembered. Over half (7 of 11) of the respondents did mention some aspects of the gender-specific programming in response to the initial four questions, in a total of nine comments. During this part of the interview six of these seven females, in a total of six comments, mentioned the “Thinking for a Change” class (not developed specifically for females but in the course of this program it is gender-specific because only girls are enrolled). This class appeared to have a perceived positive impact upon them. Examples include:

“Solving problems, the T4C (Thinking for a Change), like at times I don’t use it, like the other day I didn’t use it but I use it, I think before I act.”

“Thinking for a Change...now I am able to think about the situations that I’m in and how am I going to act to them. Like when my mom tells me “no I can’t go to this party, or you can’t do that”, you just can’t do that. I am able to like think about it... And to not get mad at her and to be able to talk it out...it helped me think about situations like I would get in trouble in here...how could I be doing this I am almost graduating... I called my

dad, and I was able to tell him that I wanted to go home early because I didn't want... to drink."

"Programs, like T4C (Thinking for a Change) helped me...learning how to follow rules, the structure. It taught me like how to work with like people, and communicate better... showed me...how to control my anger, how to be honest...how to get my point across without like being rude."

Other programming was mentioned by six respondents in a total of six comments including counseling (by three respondents); Planned Parenthood, ACT, and Girls Circle (each mentioned once) during responses to the initial four general questions. Examples include:

"I would say counseling, just the whole respect part...we get points taken away if we disrespect staff or something. You know we can have our bad days, but usually just respect. Counseling helped because some of the problems that we couldn't solve ourselves, you know like I have my thinking and they have theirs. You know counseling kind of made if fifty-fifty and even. I am a child so my parents can give me consequences...counseling just really helped for me. Me and some of the other girls...go through the same problems with our parents...talking with some of the other girls...helped me see things different...."

"...Planned Parenthood, that was a good program that we did...use protection and have a healthy lifestyle. If you're going to go out and do stuff...just make sure that you're protected. And even the relationships with like boys..."

"The programs helped, like T4C and like the Anger Control Class [ACT]...they made me like think before I reacted...when I get mad to like calm down...and just like think before I react...I used to just react and yell at them [parents] and then just do whatever I wanted, so it really helped me."

"Well, I stayed sober. And Girl's Activity...helped me get involved with the community...I gave back to the community you know."

Additionally of interest was that of the eleven respondents, four of them, without targeting a specific class or curriculum in the program mentioned that "hanging out with" or "living together" promoted group cohesiveness and improvements in relationships.

This is significant in this section of the interview because even though no gender-specific class was mentioned the act of residing together is part of gender-specific programming.

Perceived Helpfulness of Gender-Specific Programming

The second research question was: Do respondents think gender-specific programming is helpful? The second major theme emerged from responses to the first twelve interview questions. The responses partially confirmed that they would perceive gender-specific programming as helpful. Initially, female respondents described learning some skill sets and areas within their lives in which they were able to make improvements. Respondents indicated that there were several categories from which they received help within programming: relationships, health, education, and another category encompassing areas such as self-improvement, creativity and new experiences. They were also able to discuss particular parts of programming that were helpful to them in making improvements and/or realizing important issues for their future success. The second section of interview questions was about specific programs the respondents were involved in. They were able to discuss how each program was helpful to them or made their involvement in the Girls' Program positive. Additionally, in the third section the respondents were able to point out areas of gender-specific programming that they felt was difficult, not particularly helpful, or they disliked.

Areas of improvement.

Overall, the respondents perceived that they improved in four main areas of their lives: relationships (with family or others), personal health, education, and other (self-improvement, creativity, positive experiences).

Relationships.

All of the eleven respondents mentioned (in a total of 38 comments) that they noticed at least some improvement in their relationships. Nine of them, within 15 comments, were able to note improvements with family relationships, of which most focused on better communication skills, re-earned trust, and overall more positive feelings of one another, partially due to being separated and missing one another. As well, nine of the respondents mentioned in 13 comments, improved relationships with girls in particular. Many of them seemed surprised that they were able to bond and create friendships with girls they did not know, or had different backgrounds than themselves. Five of the eleven respondents (in a total of eight comments) noted improved relationships in general, for example, getting along better with people. Comments included:

“...with me and my mom, like we bonded more, we’re now getting along way better than we used to. We actually talk way more than like we used to...we talk about our feelings and there’s other problems that we have so it’s like way better.”

“Well...we kind of go through the same problems with our parents so like talking with some of the other girls kind of helped me see things different because sometimes our parents are right.”

“I definitely learned a lot on how to deal with my mom, and mine and hers relationship... And then you know it taught me that I could only control how I acted and not her, so it helped me a lot.”

“Or like what my dad had to say, I’m able to earn some of my parents trust back, and confidence.”

“...like me and my mom got a schedule of me, like how am I going to work. And like my family is actually really happy with me now. I don’t still get along that good with my dad, but I’m a step upper than always before. So this program actually helped me...”

“... I learned a lot about myself...and like how other girls are. Like before I thought it was just how me and all my friends are. I learned there’s a lot of different type of girls. Like there is a lot of different personalities than ourselves. Like I understand it now, before I would just be like ‘oh you’re a jerk, I don’t like you. I don’t even know you but I don’t care I don’t like how you look at me.’ Like I used to be mean but ...Like I put it into consideration...that’s just their personality.”

“...but after a while I learned to get along with girls a lot better. And I don’t mind being around girls now.”

“Like, just learning to get along with people that you necessarily don’t know..., like just being able to have that skill to just to communicate better and I don’t know more tolerance.”

Health.

Nine of the eleven respondents (in a total of 15 comments) identified areas of their personal health that were improved while they were in the Girls’ Program. The area of improved health mentioned most was regarding drugs and alcohol. Six of the females, in six comments, stated that they remained sober and drug free during their program. Other respondents, four of the nine (in five comments) who mentioned improved health, stated they learned about their bodies, got more exercise, or ate better. In addition, three of the young ladies, within four comments, stated they had medical type issues addressed including getting eye glasses, receiving vaccinations, and regulating medications.

Respondents offered comments such as:

“...it made me think differently...about what I used to do...I used to make mistakes a lot. It made me think...differently about alcohol. Like ‘cause I used to drink like non-stop. And now that I think of it, it’s just like it doesn’t get me anywhere. And I still have problems with it...when I see it I want it. But I kind of just like stay away from it...I haven’t been doing anything so yeah I feel pretty good.”

“Well I had to stay sober, so it helped me not ruin my body doing drugs and stuff like that, so it was helpful. And for mental health I was thinking a lot clearer...”

“My cravings...like for drinking and drugs and everything...I had the worst cravings when I was here, and the staff ...she tried her best to help me out and everything and that was probably one of the worst times I’ve had here...not everyone knows what they are dealing with but they do everything they can.”

“...I used to eat like junk food, like top ramen all of the time and that is like really bad for you. And I just learned that in here so I don’t know like trying to watch what I eat and get the right protein and stuff that I need to have...to drink milk, I hated milk before. Yeah, I drink it now. And I like watch my calories, and not like have too much you know. ‘Cause I don’t want to be like my mom cause she has like high cholesterol problems. And she has to watch everything she eats.”

“I got glasses.”

“Before I came in here, I used to basically not take my medicines like I used to. Or like how I am supposed to...But since I’ve been here, I have been obligated to.”

Education.

All of the eleven females who were interviewed mentioned (in eleven comments) some sort of improvement when asked about their education. Most of them (7 of 11) either caught up or got ahead on credits they had been lacking prior to coming into the program. One of the respondents had tested for her GED and at the time of the interview had not yet received her scores but felt confident that she had passed. The other three young ladies identified enhanced study habits, better grades and an overall improved outlook on education as areas of improvement. Comments include:

“I came in here with 6.25 credits, left here with 10.75 so I gained a lot of credits and now I’m not ahead but I am on the right track.”

“I got... out with six or seven credits. So that’s good, and I got to advance to ninth grade...I am really happy, my mom’s proud of me that I got advance. And have actually credits instead of falling behind.”

“...having to stay on task...getting the help from teachers like one on one really helped me...like I went to school and stuff but I just didn’t do anything, just kind of slept the whole time [I had] pretty much like all F’s except for English. Yeah, I actually learned a lot while being here. I just brought my grades up, I had all my credits before coming in here so...”

“...I never wanted to go to school, I hated it...[here] since we had to go to school, we had no other choice to control it...I...came here for school, so it helped me a lot...because before I would say...I can’t wait until I’m eighteen and cause I’m about to drop out. And now I figured out that it is only hurting myself, nobody else...now I actually want to do good and like finish my stuff and I want to get like a... I don’t wanna get a regular scholarship, I wanna get like a better one.”

Other perceived improvements.

Throughout the interviews many of the responses eluded to perceptions of improvements that were not specifically addressed in the interview questions.

The two areas of improvement mentioned dealt with self-improvement ideas (such as being able to better control emotions, focusing on themselves and their needs, and better self-image), and being able to express some creative abilities and experience new things.

All of the respondents (in 27 comments total) said they perceived some emotional improvement by being able to either control their anger, cope with stressful situations, or think about consequences before reacting to a situation. Eight of the eleven respondents described within 19 comments, characteristics that dealt with personal well-being such as being in tune with themselves, feeling accomplished, learning manners, working on trust issues, being able to unwind, and adapting to rules and structure. Also noteworthy was that three of the respondents made a realization that they liked not having to care what they looked like (e.g., wearing make-up, getting dressed up, saying certain things) because they felt safe among other females. Comments included:

“Yes... it helped a lot. Because you know we get mad easily, we can't control our anger. T4C just helps us like control you know...think of ways, different ways that you wouldn't even think about. Like...when your mad all you think about is yourself and being mad, but T4C just helps you...think about how they're feeling, how you make other people feel, how you can change the way you make people feel...And it was a really good thing, I liked it...I still have my papers from it.”

“... the girl's program helped me be more like in tune with myself, my feminine side, if that's how you say it.”

“[It] helped me figure out a lot about myself. Like... think more positively. Like I realized that I was kind of a negative person. And definitely like closed minded with things and then being here like helped me work on those issues.”

“... manners...listening to people. Getting along with people I live with, especially girls...trying to control my anger...trying not to talk back and like give attitude or anything.”

“Yes it was. It taught me to stop and think before reacting...I use to always just react and freak out and start yelling and breaking things. It helped so far so hopefully it will continue.”

“The positive thing is that we can be ourselves, instead of ...like, being all dressed up. And...if we did something embarrassing it's alright because we're with like our own gender you know. And I think that... being with girls can give you a lot of strength...”

Several of the respondents (8 of 11 respondents, within 11 comments) mentioned areas of the program that they enjoyed as a creative outlet. Furthermore three of the young ladies were pleased (as mentioned in four separate comments) with new experiences they were able to be involved in such as community service, and just doing things that young girls enjoy doing. Comments included:

“... you learned how to do...crafts...like actually like making things...it wasn't like paper crafts...it was like magnets, or making a scrapbook, or things like that.”

“...like made me try to be more creative...Just like every time we like do the Girl Scout thing we just do like arts and crafts, so it’s like creativity or something.”

“Doing the make-up together...the slumber party, eating chips together. My mom never let me go to none. None. Like over here is the first time. It was fun...to stay up with a bunch of girls that are like all crazy and awake...watch t.v. instead of like, anybody could stay up but having fun, actually, watching movies.”

Programs perceived as helpful.

While respondents were able to describe what aspects of their lives they perceived that they received help in, they were also able to describe some of the particular programs and how they were helpful. Respondents were asked about individual programs directly in questions 8 through 12 (see Appendix A). The program mentioned most often was the Thinking for a Change, which was mentioned as helpful by ten of the respondents in a total of 16 comments. One of the respondents stated that the class was not particularly helpful because she was already brought up with those skills and it was just common sense. In general, the respondents said that this class helped them to stop and think about their actions and consequences, it helped them to control anger, and it helped them with communication skills. Comments included:

“Yeah, it [T4C] was. Really like at times it is stuck in my head. I know at times I use it when I don’t even think I am using it. So like sometimes I don’t even know, but I know it’s up there... Stop and think...”

“Thinking for a Change...now I am able to think about the situations that I’m in and how am I going to act to them. Like when my mom tells me ‘no I can’t go to this party, or you can’t do that’, you just can’t do that. I am able to like think about it, like the situations why she doesn’t want me to do it. And to not get mad at her and to be able to talk it out.”

“Yes, it [T4C] did...it helped me...cope with situations better. ‘Cause usually it would be just arguing and snapping at each other, so...especially T4C like all the steps that we learned. I kind of use those steps with my

mom, and my brother, so that helped a lot. It's gotten really good; it's really good right now."

The second most mentioned program was Girls Circle, which was described as fun, a time to unwind and talk, a time to learn about others, and do "some cool stuff," by ten of the eleven respondents in a total of eleven comments. One of the respondents stated that this program was not particularly helpful because the only thing she did was look at magazines. Comments supporting helpfulness included:

"...it's just our time...where we can talk, we can say anything we want...because they're counselors they want to hear what you have to say, and things that you can't say in front of staff or anybody else. You know, you can just be yourself...I like it."

"In the McGee Center...there is so much stress and drama going on, it was just a place to unwind and relax and just forget about everything."

Another program, identified as being fun, creative, a place to get close to other girls, and even become more self-aware was Girl Scouts, which was mentioned as being helpful in a total of eight comments by eight of the female respondents; the other 3 respondents did not feel this program was particularly helpful. Comments included:

"Girl Scouts was fun, especially like the things they had us do, like scrapbooking and...the glitter with the gel and all that stuff that was cool...before we do anything...we do like a little paper, or like questions or something like about our self esteem, our communication like with families or whoever...just how we deal with our problems and stuff like that."

"...we would do little quizzes and stuff about like our personalities...to put in our scrap books...And then you would like read the question and circle which one and then at the end it would tell you what kind of person you are. Like a people person or stuff like that...like a group of people would you be the person to like talk, like the outgoing person...I guess I found out I'm a people person."

The Aggression Control Training (ACT) was mentioned by seven of the respondents as being helpful to them in a total of nine comments. They described it as helping them to recognize and control their anger, as well as to think first and then be able to talk things out. Of the total eleven respondents, two said this class was just not helpful, and two did not participate in this class. Comments included:

“...it teaches me to like calm down when I’m mad and think about consequences and like just like bring me down from being angry.”

“...it was in a way...how it was helpful ... we got to do the hassle logs so we don’t have to keep it inside...we can let it out but still keep it confidential...And then, the little step things, the triggers, cues, all that. Yeah, so we learned a lot about that...I have taken a lot of like ART classes...so I kind of already knew everything in there, but I never, we never did hassle logs so that was good.”

Group counseling was only viewed as helpful to 5 of the 11 respondents in a total of 6 comments. They described it as a program in which the young ladies could work out problems, feel free to talk or express themselves, and feel a sense of trust. The other six respondents did not feel this was a helpful program. Comments regarding helpfulness included:

“...[We can] solve a lot of our problems there...we can talk about it, like all together, like I’m not going to say I didn’t have you know like a lot of problems. I did have a lot you know, and when I couldn’t talk to anybody here, you know I didn’t have that connection yet with you guys, I would always wait until...girls counseling and just talk to them about it and they...help us out a lot...because then every like every girl...give their opinion on it and then you see you know their opinion and then you see an adults opinion, the counselors.”

“Counseling was pretty much my favorite one...we would do is get everything out...like we write everything that we are feeling on a piece of paper or something and then at the end of the class we just rip it up and throw it in the trash, just forget about it. And it was also helpful, ‘cause we got to like talk to each other about like say we were having a problem with each other...we got to talk about when there was like adults there and

we wouldn't have to get physical or anything and we would have to figure it out in a mature way.”

Another class of note, which was not asked directly about as part of the scripted interview questions was Planned Parenthood. Three of the young ladies mentioned it in three separate comments as being helpful to them in both areas of health and relationships. Comments included:

“I think a program the Planned Parenthood, yeah that was a good program that we did. [It taught us] to use protection and have a healthy lifestyle. If you're going to go out and do stuff... make sure that you're protected. And even the relationships with like boys and even like that.”

Difficulties and dislikes.

In addition to the categories above, there were things the female juvenile respondents commented on that they did not like. Some of the comments were in reference to particular programs while others referred to the Girls' Program overall. Seven of the respondents complained, within eleven comments, that there was a lot of drama among the females that included being able to get along with one another and talking behind each other's backs. Comments included:

“Kind of annoying... sometimes I just wanted to pop somebody...I know they would say crap behind your back and not face forward to it and like just say it when you are right there knowing that you can't do anything about it. And like some I got along with but some I didn't. It was weird.”

“...just the drama that goes on... girls are catty, like they're not very nice. There's just a lot of drama that happens with girls, like there's a lot of like hierarchy and things like that so...”

Six of the respondents felt (within 6 comments) that group counseling was somewhat of a negative experience based on being used primarily for arguing and complaining about each other, the staff, or other aspects of the program they were not

satisfied with (e.g., food, privileges). Some of the other programs were mentioned as not being helpful: Girl Scouts (mentioned in three comments by three separate respondents), Aggression Control Training (mentioned in two separate comments by two females), and Girls Circle (mentioned once), were described as just being something to do or simply not helpful. Comments included:

“[Group counseling] kind of irritated me...people would be calling each other out, and like complaining...I got kind of irritated because I mean I just think that it is a waste of time to sit there and complain. I just think that people should get over it because it’s in the past...[they complain about] staff here, and the food or “oh, I don’t get to do this, and I don’t get to wear this stuff”, and like girls here, and like there would be a lot of calling people out...It was just irritating. Really annoying after a while...like at the beginning I was complaining. But then I realized that it was just a waste of time and it just doesn’t make you any happier to sit there and complain about things that you can’t change so, eventually I just kind of sat back and just did my own thing.”

“[Group counseling]...was kind of just a time for everyone to sit there and complain about each other. And like I didn’t find really any help in it. I was pretty much just like a yelling fest at each other...the counselor kind of likes to go in circles with everything. And I don’t think we ever get anything solved.”

“I think [ACT] is just retarded...I don’t like think that like helps you...it’s like, when you’re going to do something you don’t think about that. Like you’re not going to be “Oh, what’s my cues? What’s my reducers?”... You just do it, I don’t even think that’s helping me.”

Lastly, one of the respondents commented during her interview that even though there were things that she did like about the program (she got ahead in school), for her it did not really help because “things went back to the same at home” when she returned after having graduated.

Differences in Non Gender-Specific Programming

The third research question was: How do respondents feel their experience and success may have varied in non-gender-specific programming? The last six questions in the interview were focused directly on the respondents being involved in a program that was specifically for females. The purpose was to answer the research question as to whether respondents would perceive a difference in the program or if their success may have varied if they were in a program that was not gender-specific. Within this theme, the categories that emerged were how the females thought the program would have been different, what problems they believe would occur, thoughts on how the program would have been better, and whether or not their success would have been impacted if males were involved. These responses partially confirm that females perceived a difference and that their success may have varied, or at least have been more difficult.

Program differences.

Of the eleven respondents, four (within 4 comments) felt that if males were involved in the program, the rules would have been stricter and staff would have been more watchful of their interactions. Three of the young ladies, in a total of three comments, felt that there would have been a difference in the way males are treated versus females, as that is their experience. For instance, they stated:

“I think it would be different...even here like we’re not even allowed to be near like touch each other at all and if there were guys I think it would...be like...(staff) would watch us even more.”

“I think it would probably be harder because if it was like girls and guys, I don’t think they would all have like the same privileges. ‘Cause how girls are like one thing and guys are like the other...I don’t think it would be the same. Like, the way I see it, how like my mom like, I don’t know they

treat you different... Like with other people their like more like watch over like the girls and stuff.”

Perceived problems.

Several problems emerged from the opinions of the female respondents regarding having males in the program with them. Nine of the eleven females felt, in 11 comments, that they would have been distracted by having males present in the program, as they would have been talking or flirting with them, instead of focusing on treatment. Six of the young ladies (in seven comments) also said they would not feel comfortable participating in classes or discussions with boys in the program because they would be embarrassed or feel awkward. Three of the females mentioned in three comments that problems would have arisen because males are annoying or try to be someone they are not. One of the respondents felt that there would have been increased drama among the females if males were present. Respondents offered comments such as:

“It could have been distracting. Like, I don’t know, like just distracting, like you’d be like paying attention to them I think.”

“...it would kind of be like different...I would feel like awkward...I’m just not used to doing things or like you know, while being around a guy...But with girls it’s different even if I don’t know them I’m still comfortable.”

Perceived improvements in non-gender-specific programming.

Seven of the respondents within 13 separate comments felt that they would have had a better experience in the program if there were males involved. They either felt that they get along better with males, that males are more “chill and mellow” and easier to cope with than females, or that they may have gained from male insight. Comments included:

“I think it would have been easier for me, because like I said I don’t get along very well with that many girls...especially when they are all on like their period or something, they’re like bitchy and stuff. It was hard to like cope with that ‘cause I don’t know it was just on your nerves like quick.”

“...might have learned stuff from both sides. And...probably would have been a lot easier to have some guys to talk to. Like learn stuff about the guys, and learn stuff about the girls, and kind of meet in the middle with what I was learning.”

Impacted success.

The last question of the interview asked the females directly if they felt that having males in the program would have impacted their success. Six of the respondents could answer quite confidently that males would not have ultimately impacted their success in the Girls’ Program. Four of the young ladies either felt that they would not have been *as* successful, or they would have still graduated but would have had some difficulties along the way. One respondent felt that she would not have graduated at all if males were present. Examples included:

“No, I don’t think [having boys in the program] would have. I would have [graduated] anyway. Pretty much or maybe a little bit easier. Yeah, ‘cause we got of course that thing where I don’t really get along with that many girls they get irritating quick. I don’t know, just girls are more like that.”

“...if there were boys in the program... I’d probably not be right here. ‘Cause I’d be getting in a lot more trouble. I think it is easier to go along without guys.”

Discussion

Many gender-specific programs have been developed and implemented in the juvenile justice system over the past three decades. In order to increase the effectiveness of such programs, it would be beneficial to determine how young women perceive being involved in this type of programming. This study has shown that, in the context of the presented program, female juvenile offenders overall perceive gender-specific programming as having a positive impact. The females involved in the current study generally perceived that specific aspects of their lives were improved by the gender-specific program. They were also able to explain how particular programming and classes were helpful to them. Furthermore, participants identified what differences there might have been in the overall program, and their progress, if it had been non-gender-specific.

The current study showed that, without being defined or described to female juvenile offenders, many could remember gender-specific programming with regards to their experiences within the facility in which they had resided. Most of the young ladies identified particular classes and the overall program practices they were involved in with respect to relationships, personal health, education, and other personal characteristics.

The current study showed that being in a program that was gender-specific, with classes, programming, and residential components specifically aimed at females, had a perceived positive impact upon them. Not only did they perceive the aforementioned aspects of their lives (relationships, personal health, education, and other personal characteristic) has having been improved; they were also able to identify improvements with other relationships, community connectedness, willingness to get along with others,

and factors of the programming that influenced their intentions to make better choices with regards to future offending (e.g., drug use, fighting, running away, incorrigibility).

Though most of the females stated that their ultimate success in the program would not have been impeded were there males involved, many of them said they might have struggled along the way. Many of the participants in the study preferred that the program was female only, and stated that having males there would have been distracting, annoying, and could have added to the level of drama already inherent in the programming. A few of the participants felt that possibly having males in the program may have improved their learning and participation. These ladies felt that they could relate better to males as they are calmer and less dramatic than females. As well, they thought having a male perspective may have helped them better understand certain situations they are faced with as juveniles.

Some of the females felt that the drama that goes along with being around other young women all of the time was a barrier to their overall focus of gender-specific programming. One of the females consistently responded that the classes and programming were either not helpful, or that she could not see how they were helpful to her. Another female stated that the program did not work well for her because it did not change anything for her at home, and when she returned things went back to how they were before she entered the program. A couple of the females mentioned that even though they could see how the program, being gender-specific, would work well for some females, it was not essential to their success. These results have implications for females and gender-specific programming with regards to juvenile justice approaches, theory, and legal professionals.

Implications for Justice Approaches

Overall, this study has implications that gender-specific programming can be an important tool in the approaches of restorative justice and therapeutic jurisprudence. This may be accomplished by the offender being placed in a community based program that requires classes and programming as part of rehabilitation. This would not only hold the offender accountable by “serving time” and learning skills, but also work to address the issues that led to her offending (Bazemore & Day, 1996; Wexler & Winick, 1996). Several of the females in this study indicated that some of their issues were addressed while in the program, including becoming clean and sober, receiving counseling, and learning how to deal with their anger.

Additionally, the community is restored when members become involved in the rehabilitation process of the offenders. A connectedness is created by providing programs and events that educate the offenders and assist them in community involvement. In turn, members of the community feel a sense of security when the offenders are diverted from future delinquency. The females in the study stated that they learned to get along better with people, that they obtained a sense of connectedness and motivation with regards to school, and that they became involved in community activities.

Victims may benefit in a variety of ways as well. For parents who are victims of running away, incorrigibility, drug use, or school related issues by female offenders, gender-specific programming has shown to improve relationships, stop current drug use and increase intentions for sobriety, and increase motivation to succeed in school. Other possible victims may be indirectly affected as well due to deterred future offending. The

females involved in this study stated that they better understood their parents' perspectives, and that by dealing with their anger issues they got along better with others instead of simply reacting aggressively. Thus, by balancing all of those involved in female juvenile offending, justice is restored (Bazemore & Day, 1996).

Under the perspective of therapeutic jurisprudence, gender-specific programming is shown in this study to be useful. By giving gender-specific programming to female juvenile offenders the underlying causes of their offending are being addressed (Wexler & Winick, 1996). These young ladies and their families are forced to face the issues that led to their offending; these issues may be different from those that males face. Thus, because their gender-related issues are specifically addressed, it is likely more therapeutic to them than a gender-neutral, "one size fits both genders" program. For example, some of these females became clean and sober after learning how to deal their anger and emotions. They also learned how to create and maintain positive relationships that have been shown to be so important to females. For many of these females, it was simply being able to either catch up or get ahead in school that made them feel accomplished and better about themselves.

More generally, the approach taken in this program has the potential to be rehabilitative rather than merely punitive. Punitive approaches have been shown in the traditional system not to be effective with regards to female offenders (Sherman, 2005; Wexler & Winick, 1996). Experts have noted that when females form positive relationships and connections to individuals and programs they are less likely to re-offend (Sherman, 2005). Thus, a therapeutic jurisprudence approach to gender-specific programming also may promote perceived legitimacy. Female offenders perceive

improvements to their lives and situations through gender-specific programming. In the current study, the respondents perceived that the program was focused on females and their best interest. They commented on learning about their bodies and how to protect themselves. They also stated that some of the programming allowed them to simply do female things like crafts, talking about female issues, or just bonding with other females. Some of the females stated that they formed bonds with the instructors and counselors that allowed them to feel comfortable discussing and dealing with their issues. These perceived improvements will support the disposition to be placed in such a program as fair and just therefore leading to the legitimacy of juvenile justice professionals and the system (Tyler, 2006). And thus, female juvenile offenders will be more likely to comply with parental rules and expectations, societal standards, and the law (Sherman, 2005; Tyler, 2006).

Implications for Theory

The results of the current study support the use of theory in the development of gender-specific programming. With regards to social context, gender-specific programming addresses the behaviors of young women by changing the context of their relationships and treatment (Burke et al., 2009). By being placed in an environment where their needs and relationships are valued, their behaviors are adjusted to conform to the given support. The implications for gender-specific programming with regards to social context theory are that by shaping the structure of the females' environment, their day-to-day experiences will affect their overall behaviors (Pasick & Burke, 2008). For the females in this study, the relationships they built while in the program and the changes they perceived in the relationships they have outside of the program, affects the

choices that they make. Several of the females mentioned that they have a better understanding of the consequences of their past choices and intend to make better choices for their behaviors in the future (e.g., respecting parental rules, not using drugs and alcohol, creating positive relationships). Some of the females were able to address personal issues through counseling and program discussions that dealt with why they started running away and using drugs and alcohol. They stated that they learned to deal with their emotions in a more effective manner. They also stated that they understand why parents make rules for them that are different than for males, which is in order to protect them. Therefore, the development of gender-specific programming may impact female re-offending. Because gender molds attitudes and beliefs based on experiences, positive perceptions of gender-specific programming should yield positive behaviors (Burke et al., 2009). As such, the use of this theory may lead to the meaningful development of gender-specific programs as a means to combat female juvenile offending.

There are also implications for gender-specific programming with regards to strain theory. It is the inference of strain theory that “blocked” opportunities to achieve success (Merton, 1938) and negative life experiences (Agnew, 2001) can lead to delinquent behaviors. Gender-specific programming focuses on the needs and the strengths of female juvenile offenders (Acoca, 1999). The females in this study indicated that they had created or repaired positive relationships while in this program. They also stated that they had realized that they could be successful in school and self-improvement. Some of the females indicated that they had developed coping skills to adjust for things in their lives (negative experiences) that they cannot change (e.g., past

abuse, current family issues). Therefore the findings of this study imply that reducing strain or removing “blocked” opportunities can lead to perceived success and again combat female juvenile offending.

Implications for Legal Professionals

The findings of the study have implications for program developers, policymakers, and juvenile justice professionals that gender-specific residential programs are beneficial to female juvenile offenders. This study implies that when females are put into a treatment-like setting amongst other females, they feel they are not alone in the problems they have faced, specifically that they go through the same problems with their parents as other females. The females in this study stated that they learned from each other’s experiences as well as the various curriculum/programming they had together to generate tolerance, coping skills and techniques in order to deal with problems. The females in this study not only perceived that being surrounded by other females, but having programs specifically targeting their needs, improved certain aspects of their lives.

This study specifically implies that a residential program for females which uses gender-specific programming and curriculum is generally perceived positively by the intended population. That is to say, residential programs may be more beneficial than day treatment or intermittent programs. Females involved in this study identified the act of residing together (learning to live and get along with each other) as improving the groups’ cohesiveness and helping them build relationships that they found meaningful. As well, residing amongst other females, these females felt that they could focus better on their actual needs because they felt safe in expressing themselves, and did not feel the

pressure to have to impress each other or impress males (e.g., doing their hair and make-up).

In addition, this study implies that by being in a residential program, many of the female participants felt they received a much needed reprieve from problems and conflicts at their own homes. Many of the young ladies stated that by not living at home they had time apart from their families to have some space to reflect upon how other people may be affected by their behaviors. They also stated that for both their families and themselves, the feeling of separation made them realize how much they missed each other and helped improve communication.

Conversely, one implication of this study that may support day treatment instead of residential programs is that a common complaint of the participants was there is a lot of drama associated with females. Therefore, if females are around each other in school and programming throughout the day and then spend the evenings together in a home-like environment the drama (i.e., getting along, talking behind each other's backs) may be increased due to the intense amount of time they spend together. For a residential program this may imply that spending time dealing with these conflicts between program participants may increase positive perceptions of the females involved. Ultimately, this study has shown that gender-specific programs can be useful and that the perceptions of the targeted populations are helpful in determining what works.

With regards to the legal system, this study implies that professionals in the traditional, male-oriented system need to critically look at how females are treated and processed throughout the juvenile justice system (Sherman, 2005). The lack of programming and interaction between offenders and staff in traditional systems do not

address female needs or how they respond to treatment (Humphrey, 2004; Sherman, 2005). Females in gender-specific programming are exposed to classes and curriculums that address and embrace the issues for females. The females in this study participated in programming that allowed them to bond with other female juveniles and staff. They stated that because they were among other females they felt comfortable to just be themselves and discuss things they would otherwise be embarrassed to talk about in front of males. They also participated in classes that embraced their creativity that they felt was female oriented, such as arts and crafts. An important factor for female rehabilitation is based on creating bonds and trusting relationships (Sherman, 2005). Once these relationships are built, these females stated they were comfortable learning how to cope with their issues and emotions. If females learn to cope with the stressors that led to their offending, they may not re-offend; in effect less female juvenile offenders will continue to offend into adulthood (Hartwig & Myers, 2003). As such, if adult offending is avoided the intergenerational cycle of offending will be reduced (Lederman & Brown, 2004; Sherman, 2005).

Limitations of the Study

Though this current study showed that the program was perceived overall by most female juvenile offenders as having a positive impact upon them, the study is not without its limitations. One of these limitations is based upon the short period of time allowed to collect interview data. The short period of time only allows for a small number of participants to be available for interviewing. This creates a limitation of ecological validity and generalizability, the threat to validity is selection-treatment interaction (Gay et al., 2006). This means that the concern is whether the results of this study can be

applied to all female juvenile offenders (Gay et al., 2006) because the small, non-random number of subjects in this study may produce results that are too narrow and are not representative of all females in similar situations. This small number of participants led to limitations in age and legal history which could have impacted results. The age range of the females in this study was 14-17 years old; therefore results may not be the same for females who are either younger or older than this range. Similarly, there is a limitation in the use of only females who graduated the program. These females may be different than those who did not successfully complete the program. For example, those who graduated may have been court-ordered and felt a certain amount of duress to complete the program; or those who graduated may have been stronger willed, had better support systems at home, or different motivational factors than those who did not graduate. The females who graduated the program may have produced different results in this study as compared to other females because they were able to receive the full benefits of being in the Girls' Program. These females were exposed to more classes, programming, and counseling. They were also given more of an opportunity to catch up on credits and improve their grades in school. By having this increased exposure to benefits of the program, they may have answered more positively than others. As well, the results may not be able to be generalized to females with different offending histories.

Secondly, this study is also limited in the scope of its location; this is also a limitation of ecological validity and generalizability. This study was conducted in one mid-sized community in the West. In order for this study to present valid research it should be replicated on a larger scale in different types of communities to determine whether or not the results are replicated in different areas and among different

demographics. The size of Reno, Nevada, as compared to other communities (smaller or larger) may produce different results due to available services, proximity of juvenile justice facilities, and attitudes of authorities. In this sense, the social context of females' environmental experiences may shape how they respond to the study. Thus, these different experiences may result in different responses to this particular study. Females from different areas may have different issues, which may or may not be addressed by the specific types of classes and curricula in this program. For example, females from large cities may be influenced by socioeconomic differences, differences in population demographics, or experiences with increased crime rates and gangs. These differences may lead to different types of offending or different means to cope with the underlying causes of offending. Another difference may be in the level of family involvement with regards to similar programming, leading to differing results. For example, if a similar program was implemented in a larger city the accessibility and increased travel time to the facility may lead to less family involvement and therefore impacting the perceived success of participants. Thus, the results that may come from different areas of the country may not be able to be generalized to all female juvenile offenders.

A third limitation of this study is that it only represents one gender-specific program. Other facilities and programs may use different practices, procedures, and curriculum that could ultimately affect reliability of the study and ecological validity (Gay et al., 2006). Results may also differ based on the length of time females are enrolled in gender-specific programming: if a program is shorter they may not perceive as much of an impact, or if the program is longer the impact may be perceived as greater. The results may not be able to be generalized to other programs that have different

referral procedures, or structure. Generalizability may be affected by different programs that vary in curriculum. In a related note, a limitation to a program with several types of curricula may lead to multiple-treatment interference, meaning it cannot be said for sure if there is one part of a program or the program as a whole that led to the results (Gay et al., 2006). As well, the third research question (How do respondents perceive the program would have been different or their success may have varied if they were in a non-gendered program?) has limitations in the sense that the respondents are speculating on these answers, which may vary if given the opportunity to be involved in non-gendered programming. If the respondents have never been involved in any programs that are non-gendered they may not realize what the differences might be. And since this program in particular did not involve males, they are unable to say with certainty how they would act, how things might be different or if they would have been successful. Therefore, their speculations may be inaccurate.

A fourth limitation of ecological validity to this study is response bias (Gay et al., 2006). This may be attributed to the fact that self-reports of attitudinal changes are sometimes inaccurate based on under- or over-exaggeration (Gay et al., 2006). This could be because of self-presentation bias—young women want to seem “fixed.” There is also danger of response bias because the interviewer is known as a staff member from the program which may cause the young women to respond either positively or negatively about the program based upon their relationship with the interviewer. Despite these limitations, this study is useful because it shows promise that gender-specific programming will likely have a perceived positive impact upon female juvenile offenders in the juvenile justice system.

Future Studies

Other studies that may be conducted in the future may benefit from the results and limitations of this study. The first lesson to be learned from this study would be to conduct research, whether in the same location or others, for a longer period of time in order to gather a larger number of participants. This would change the limitations of data collection and allow for increased validity. By being able to conduct the same study for a year or more the number of participants could be doubled or tripled and would show whether a greater number of participants would yield the same results.

Another interesting study would be to re-interview the respondents from this current study six months to a year after the initial interview to see if they had re-offended or if their perceptions had changed. Similarly, future studies with other participants could incorporate this by tracking respondents from the time of graduation for a longer period of time (six months or a year) to determine if the perceptions of the program changed for them over the course of time. It could also be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study maybe ten years after, when participants are adults, to see if they had re-offended, changed perceptions, or even how they manage their own children.

The limitation of the scope of location could also be amended in the future. The same study could be replicated in other areas. Studies could be conducted in locations that are smaller, larger, or similar in size to the current study. As well studies conducted in different areas of the country may provide important results. Such studies could be based upon the same research questions; however the actual interview tool may have to be changed in order to reflect the curriculum and practices of other gender-specific programs.

It would be interesting to develop the current study to be more comprehensive. One way of doing this would be to conduct research using a pre-test/post-test format. This would enable researchers to see actual changes in perceptions and program effects from the time they entered the program to the time they graduated.

A second method for increasing comprehensiveness would be to conduct an in depth history on each participant. This could include a history of abuse or neglect, behavioral and legal histories, extent of past drug or alcohol use, and parental (or familial) involvement with drugs and/or crime. This would provide a clearer picture on exactly what issues can be addressed by gender-specific programming. As well it would help determine if varying histories lead to differing perceptions.

Another way to increase the comprehensiveness of research in the future would be to include an interview of the parents/guardians. This could provide important insight into how parents perceive not only the program itself, but also how they perceive changes or improvements for their daughters.

It would also be interesting to see if results of the study would vary if the interviews were conducted by someone who was completely unknown to the participants. This could improve limitations of bias. Because the interviewer in this study was employed in the program a relationship had been formed between the interviewer and the participants. Participants may respond differently with someone they do not know. Respondents may be more honest and descriptive by not feeling pressure to answer a certain way. On the other hand, respondents may be less open to discussion if they did not feel comfortable talking in front of someone they had not formed a relationship with.

Future studies could also attempt to find whether gender-specific programming actually works. This could be done by comparing groups of female juvenile offenders: some of them could be interviewed in traditional detention facilities, others could be assigned to gender-specific programming, and some could be assigned to non-gendered programming. This would provide not only a comparison for programming versus little to no programming (in many detention facilities); it would also compare non-gendered to gender-specific programming.

Conclusion

The juvenile justice system is ever-changing and the traditional, male oriented system has led to the increased involvement of young women in juvenile justice (Humphrey, 2004; Morgan & Patton, 2002; Sherman, 2005). Young women who are delinquent as youth continue criminal activity into adulthood and then go on to have children who become delinquent (Lederman & Brown, 2004; Sherman, 2005). The current trend to implement gender-specific programming for female offenders must be based upon what is shown to have a positive impact. The results of the current study indicate that such programs may in fact have positive effects on female juvenile offenders. This is not to say that females have special needs and that males do not. Males assuredly have life experiences that may result in involvement in the criminal justice system. This means instead, that the male oriented system has always been gender-specific for males. Because males have historically been the majority of those arrested and detained, the system has been built on how to control and punish them. The criminal justice system has typically relied upon a militaristic structure, such as still the practice throughout the majority of the system. Therefore, male-specific simply implies that females are not present.

Trauma-sensitive, gender-specific treatment models are necessary for female juvenile offenders in order to prevent future offending (Frabutt et al., 2008). Successful programs will enlist staff that is well trained in the specific needs of young women and be based upon research and meaningful assessment tools (Biden, 2003). Programming should address the multi-level needs of education, health care, parenting skills, and counseling (Biden, 2003). Furthermore, programming should be developed with

rehabilitation in mind. Gender-specific programming should focus on the issues commonly faced by these females, and make them feel that the treatment they receive is helpful and addresses their needs, thereby urging them to make positive choices and refrain from continued involvement in the juvenile justice system. The results of this study indicate that when female juvenile offenders perceive that their issues are recognized, and they can receive help to address their issues, they are able to make some positive changes. The results support the need for female juvenile offenders to form meaningful relationships and feel accomplished (in school, in being able to get along).

Much research has been conducted which focuses on the causes of female delinquency: abuse, neglect, disconnectedness, and lack of positive relationships. This research has led to the development of gender-specific programs. The current study indicates that respondents did perceive that gender-specific programming helps with some of these issues, mostly with relationships. Now it is time for further research to focus on how gender-specific programming works and what improvements can be made.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

TITLE OF STUDY: Impressions of Juvenile Justice Programming

INVESTIGATORS: Monica K. Miller, J.D., Ph.D.; Lacey Miller

PROTOCOL NUMBER: SB09/10-012

1. Can you tell me what parts, if any, of your experience at the McGee Center helped you with your relationships with your family?
 2. Can you tell me what parts, if any, of your experience at the McGee Center helped you with your own personal health?
 3. Can you tell me what parts, if any, of your experience at the McGee Center helped you with your education?
 4. Can you tell me if there are any parts of your experience at the McGee Center that helped you with anything else?
-
5. What was it like for you to be in a program involving only girls?
 6. What are issues that you face specific to being a girl?
 7. Do you remember any parts of the program that were specific to being a girl?
 8. Was the "Thinking for a Change" class helpful to you? If so, how?
 9. Was the "ACT" class helpful to you? If so, how?
 10. Was "Girls Circle" helpful to you? If so, how?
 11. Was participating in Girl Scouts helpful to you? If so, how?
 12. Was participating in group counseling helpful to you? If so, how?
-
13. How do you think your experience would have been different if you were in a program that was not specifically for girls?
 14. If you weren't in a program with only girls, in what ways would it be different?
 15. Are there positive aspects of being in a program for girls only?
 16. Are there negative aspects of being in a program for girls only?
 17. If you had classes with boys, how might your participation be different?
 18. Would having boys in the program have impacted your success? If so, how?