

A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF RISK FACTORS INFLUENCING  
FEMALE ADOLESCENT DELINQUENCY IN  
DALLAS COUNTY, TEXAS

by

VICKI LYNN TANKERSLEY

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

May 2006

Copyright © by Vicki Lynn Tankersley 2006

All Rights Reserved

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful for the invaluable assistance, guidance, and encouragement provided to me by my supervising professor, Dr. Joan Rycraft. In addition, I am thankful for the suggestions and professional guidance provided to me by my other committee members, Dr. O. Elmer Polk, Dr. Emily Spence, Dr. Debra Woody, and Dr. Catheleen Jordan.

I am thankful to my husband, Eric, for all of his patience and support throughout this entire process and my unborn son's presence to help motivate me to finally complete my degree. Thanks also go out to my family, including my father and brother for encouraging and financing my education. Finally I want to thank my mother, who passed away during my first year in the program, for providing me with angels to help keep the light shining at the end of this tunnel.

Special thanks to the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department, Dallas County Juvenile Board, and Mr. Michael Griffiths, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer for granting access to the youth and Probation Officers of Dallas County, Texas.

March 22, 2006

ABSTRACT

A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF RISK FACTORS INFLUENCING  
FEMALE ADOLESCENT DELINQUENCY IN  
DALLAS COUNTY, TEXAS

Publication No. \_\_\_\_\_

Vicki Lynn Tankersley, PhD.

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2006

Supervising Professor: Joan Rycraft

The purpose of this study was to identify the risk factors influencing juvenile delinquency for females in Dallas County, Texas and discuss the implications of the findings for future practice, policy, and research. Qualitative research methods in this study have given a voice to female adolescents housed in the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center by giving these young women the opportunity to share and convey information about their lives and factors they felt had been influential in their referral to the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department.

The sample included twenty-six female adolescents who were housed at the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center between April 2005 and May 2005. Each

respondent was between twelve and seventeen years old and currently facing at least one petition of delinquency or violation of her probation. Each youth agreed to participate in a face-to-face interview that was audio-recorded. The phenomenological approach to qualitative data analysis was utilized and the process of data scrutiny involved the search and organization of statements regarding the ways respondents experienced factors and events in their daily lives.

Results showed that most young women had been referred to the juvenile department for a non-serious and non-violent offense; there were a disproportionate number of minority female youth detained compared to the county's population; and the majority of youth had previously been referred to the juvenile department. In addition, the majority of youth reported a good relationship with at least one adult in their home; over half described enjoying portions of their educational experiences; the youth came from a wide variety of neighborhoods; and very few youth reported previous incidents of abuse or neglect. Yet, the majority of youth reported previously engaging in high-risk behaviors including: use and experimentation with substances, association with negative peer groups, and poor decision making skills. Overall, the majority of youth viewed themselves in a positive light but indicated they lacked the appropriate coping, decision making and problem solving skills to adequately cope with the variety of stressors encountered in their family units, friendships, neighborhoods, communities, and schools.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Statistical Depiction.....	1
1.2 Typology of the Female Juvenile Delinquent.....	6
1.3 Complexities .....	7
1.4 The Impact of Federal and State Policies on Female Juvenile Delinquents.....	8
1.5 Female Juvenile Delinquency in Texas .....	10
1.6 Statement of the Problem .....	13
1.7 Importance of Issue to Social Work .....	14
1.8 Purpose of the Study .....	15
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	17
2.1 Methods for Empirical Review .....	17
2.2 Methodological Concerns .....	18
2.3 Description of Studies .....	19

2.4 Types of Studies .....	19
2.5 Sample Collection Methods .....	21
2.6 Samples Sizes .....	23
2.7 Statistical Analysis .....	24
2.8 Theory .....	24
2.9 Demographics of Female Juvenile Delinquents .....	25
2.10 Empirical Findings .....	31
2.11 Limitations of Current Analysis .....	48
2.12 Conclusions .....	52
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	53
3.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Female Juvenile Delinquency .....	53
3.2 Ecological Systems Framework .....	72
4. METHODS .....	90
4.1 Rationale for Qualitative Design .....	90
4.2 Instrument .....	92
4.3 Participants .....	94
4.4 Sampling Methods .....	96
4.5 Confidentiality & Protection of Respondents.....	99
4.6 Trustworthiness .....	101
4.7 Required Approvals ... ..	102
4.8 Data Collection Procedures .....	103
4.9 Data Analysis .....	104

4.10 Methods of Data Analysis .....	106
4.11 Triangulation of Data.....	107
4.12 Limitations of Current Study.....	108
5. RESULTS .....	111
5.1 Data Collection .....	111
5.2 Participants .....	113
5.3 Personal Dynamics.....	118
5.4 Mental Health.....	125
5.5 Education .....	133
5.6 Family Dynamics.....	140
5.7 Environmental Dynamics .....	152
5.8 Friends and Relationships .....	156
5.9 Summary Disclosures .....	160
6. DISCUSSION .....	165
6.1 Youth Characteristics .....	165
6.2 Risk Factors .....	166
6.3 Implications .....	183
6.4 Conclusion .....	195

Appendix

A. STUDIES INCLUDED IN EMPIRICAL REVIEW .....	198
B. FACTORS INFLUECING FEMALE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY .....	224
C. CONCEPTUAL MAP OF ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	226



D. MINOR ASSENT FORM .....	228
E. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET .....	231
F. YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE.....	233
G. PROBATION OFFICER QUESTIONNAIRE.....	236
REFERENCES .....	239
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION.....	255

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
5.1 Demographic Data.....	115
5.2 Self-Report Drug Use.....	119
5.3 Self-Report Types of Drug Use.....	119

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Based on an extensive review of available empirical research, it appears that the juvenile justice system, academic research community, and juvenile rehabilitation practitioners generally have neglected female juvenile offenders by typically focusing research on the male juvenile offender. According to Chesney-Lind & Shelden (1998), two of the foremost researchers regarding female juvenile offending, “the academic study of delinquent behavior has, for all intents and purposes, been the study of male delinquency” (p. 2). Over the past decade, however, female juvenile offenders have gained increased attention from each entity due to a proportional increase in female offending rates, an influx of feministic research endeavors, and attention from the media. The juvenile justice system has paid particular attention to these young women due in part to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program revealing that between 1994 and 2003, arrests for juvenile females generally increased more (or decreased less) than male arrests in most offense categories (Snyder, 2005).

#### 1.1 Statistical Depiction

In 2002 in the State of Texas, 28.6% of all referrals to county juvenile probation departments involved females and in 2000, females accounted for 29.2% of all referrals

to Texas county probation departments (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, 2002). In Texas, the term delinquency case refers to crimes committed by a person between the ages of 10 and 18, ranging from a status offense such as runaway or truancy to a violent offense such as aggravated assault or murder. According to Chesney-Lind (2002) “what we’re seeing is not an increase in violence among girls so much as a closing of the gap between what girls have always done ... and arrest statistics” (as cited in Rozen, 2002).

Upon closer inspection, generally in the past decade, juvenile arrest rates are down. Overall for the past nine years, there has been a steady decrease in the juvenile arrest rates for Violent Crime Index offenses (Snyder, 2005). According to Shelden (2004), “during the past decade we have witnessed a significant decrease in youth crime for both sexes” (p. 17). Shelden also (2004) states “although 378,895 arrests of girls occurred in 2003, arrests of males outnumber female arrests by more than a 2:1 ratio, meaning that more than two boys are arrested for every girl” (p. 5). Further, the most recent statistical data available from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) regarding juvenile offenders notes that between 1994 and 2003 there has been an 18% decline in arrest rates for all juveniles and that between 1999 and 2003 there was an 11% decrease in the number of juveniles arrested (Snyder, 2005). While these and other statistical reports regarding juvenile offending rates and patterns indicate encouraging trends, problems still remain.

In 2003, law enforcement agencies made 643,000 arrests of females under age 18 which accounted for 29% of all juvenile arrests (Snyder, 2005). In addition,

“females accounted for 24% of juvenile arrests for aggravated assault and 32% of those for other assaults in 2003, far more than their involvement in other types of violent crimes” (Snyder, 2005, p. 1). According to Shelden (2004), for the offense of other assaults, “girls’ arrest rates increased by 83 percent between 1970 and 1980, by 59 percent between 1980 and 1990, and by 47 percent between 1990 and 2003” (p. 11).

Overall, in 1999, females accounted for just 24% of the delinquency cases, yet they accounted for 59% of juvenile arrests for running away and 54% of juvenile arrests for prostitution (American Bar Association & National Bar Association, 2001). Further statistics regarding female juvenile offenders reveal that in 2001 females accounted for 18% of the violent crime index for juveniles, 23% of juvenile arrests for aggravated assaults, 37% of juvenile offenses against the family and children, and 31% of the total property crime index for juvenile arrests (Snyder, 2003). Additionally, in 2001, female juveniles accounted for 21.1 % of the 2.1 million total arrests of female offenders (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2002).

According to the American Bar Association et al. (2001) between 1988 and 1997, the number of delinquency cases involving females increased 83%; with data showing an increase for all racial groups: white, 74%; black, 106%; and other races, 102%. During the same reporting period, “the number of delinquency cases involving females under age 16 increased 89%, while the number of cases involving females age 16 or older increased 74%” (Scahill, 2000, p.1). Therefore, these statistics reveal that regardless of the offenders’ race or age, offense committed or severity, female juveniles are entering the juvenile justice system at an increasing rate.

Of concern here is whether or not females are increasingly engaging in delinquent activities, or are these numbers simply reflective of increased attention being paid to females who engage in delinquent acts. For example, are the increasing numbers of youth referred for violent offenses due to an increase in violent behavior or an increase in police attention to gang related violent behaviors. Another explanation might be due not to an increase in family problems such as domestic violence and disruptive behavior in the home, but rather a change in the manner in which police departments handle calls regarding domestic violence and disputes; i.e. are police officers now arresting young women who they previously would counsel in the home or handle through another informal method. Finally, according to Shelden (2004), “some of this increase is undoubtedly a reflection of a real increase in violence, which may be a reflection of larger and more structural problems in modern society that are causing greater violence among both male and female youth” (p. 14).

Once inside the court system, the statistical picture reveals that females are experiencing an increase in all types of dispositions, they are being increasingly referred for treatment services, and there are a higher number of females being transferred to criminal court. In 1996, females were detained most often for person and public order offense cases; from 1987 to 1996, the number of formal probation cases increased 126% for females compared with a 70% increase for males; and females represented 13% of juvenile offenders in residential custody facilities (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). Additionally, the number of female cases waived to criminal court was 25% higher in

1999 than in 1990, which accounted for 5.6% of all cases judicially waived to criminal court (Stahl, Finnegan, and Kang, 2002).

Most of the statistical research available reports on the factors and characteristics of female juvenile delinquents referred to the juvenile justice system, very few reports include any information about what happens to these young women once incarcerated in the system. Some of the statistical information available reveals “the number of female detention cases increased by 23% between 1989 and 1993, while the corresponding increase for males was 18%” (Poe-Yamagata & Butts, p. 14, 1996) and in the San Francisco area between 1990 and 1994 there was a 121% increase in the number of female juvenile offenders detained, “resulting in overcrowding that led to girls sleeping on mattresses, three to a cell” (American Bar Association et al., 2001). Yet the Poe-Yamagata & Butts (1996) study also shows that “female offenders were less likely than males to be ordered to an out-of-home placement following juvenile court adjudication and disposition”(p. 16). In addition, one national study of 443 delinquency program evaluations conducted since 1950 revealed that 34.8% of these programs only served males and 42.4% served primarily boys. In 1992, only 2.3% of delinquency programs strictly served girls and 5.9% served primarily girls (Lipsey, 1992).

Once adjudicated, female offenders are reporting incarceration periods from a few months to several years (Acoca, 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Cauffman et al., 1998; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995) and they are often returned to detention centers for technical violations at a higher rate than male offenders (American Bar Association et

al., 2001; Poe-Yamagata & Butts, 1996). One empirical study even found a statistically significant relationship between length of stay and recidivism; in the study, recidivist females on average stayed 232 days in an institution while non-recidivists stayed an average of 198 days (Archwamety et al., 1998). Finally, female juvenile offenders within the walls of correctional facilities are continuing to experience violence and victimization similar to the treatment they received in their communities, including acts of physical, mental, and emotional abuse (Acoca, 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Bloom et al., 2002; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000).

### 1.2 Typology of the Female Juvenile Delinquent

Recent research provides a somewhat composite picture of America's female juvenile delinquent, she typically comes from a fragmented family; has been victimized both inside and outside of the juvenile justice system; may suffer from physical or mental health disorders; has experienced school failure or discrimination; has a low self-worth; and is becoming increasingly violent (Acoca, 1998; American Bar Association et al., 2001; Bodinger-Deuriate, 1991; Dembo, Williams & Schmeidler, 1993; and Snyder, 2003). These female juvenile offenders also suffer from peer pressure, improper socialization, poor role modeling, derogatory labeling, and negative environmental factors (Bloom et al., 2002; Esbensen, Deschenes & Winfree, 1999; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001; Wallace Goddard, Goff & Melancon, 2000; Wang, 2000). With all of these ecological pressures, it is not hard to believe that a young girl might turn to drugs or alcohol to escape the pain; a gang to find



a sense of belonging and love; or an older man to treat her the way her mother's partners may have treated the women in their lives.

### 1.3 Complexities

There are common challenges encountered when state programs attempt to address the issues of female juvenile delinquents. Some of these challenges include: a growing number of female offenders, the demand for comprehensive needs assessments that identify gaps in the provision of services for girls, the necessity of developing and implementing gender specific services and programs designed to meet the unique needs of girls, competition for scarce resources, immense variability in the findings and perspectives from empirical research on female juvenile delinquents, and a limited understanding of what works for girls (Acoca, 1999; Belknap et al., 1997; Budnick & Shields-Fletcher, 1998; Kakar, Friedemann & Peck, 2002). However, despite the challenges in developing gender specific programs, something must be done to address the growing number of female juvenile delinquents.

Many of the empirical studies that include findings on adolescent girls suggest that significantly different risk factors for delinquency exist between boys and girls (Belknap et al., 1997; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001; Wallace Gooddard, et al., 2000). Yet, the majority of treatment programs for juvenile offenders utilize treatment models based solely on the risk factors and needs of male juvenile delinquents, and futilely adapt their original treatment model to the treatment of the female offender, not to the risk factors and needs of the female offender (Chamberlain & Reid, 1994; Stattin & Magnusson, 1996). At the same time, the

variability in findings regarding risk factors for female juvenile delinquency creates confusion regarding what premises are of greatest importance when attempting to rehabilitate this population.

Therefore, in order for a community to determine what types of interventions are needed for the female juvenile offenders in their area, an inclusive risk and needs assessment must first be conducted. Ultimately, knowledge regarding an individual's experiences of particular problems upon entrance to the juvenile justice system will allow him or her to be placed in an intervention program suitable to the individual's needs (Dembo, et al., 1993). Once the assessment has been completed, the community's service providers can work to develop programs targeting female juvenile delinquents and address the needs of these young women.

#### 1.4 The Impact of Federal and State Policies on Female Juvenile Delinquents

Congress initiated its response to the growing problem of juvenile crime with the passage of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974, which as amended, established four mandates with which each participating state and territory must comply. The mandates are: (1) deinstitutionalization of status offenders and non-offenders (DSO), (2) sight-and-sound separation of juveniles from adults in detention and correctional facilities, (3) removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups, and (4) demonstration of efforts to reduce the disproportionate confinement of minority youth in places where it still exists (Schwartzstein & Steketee, 1990).

Congress first addressed the problem of female juvenile offenders in 1992 as part of the reauthorization of the JJDP Act. In order for states to receive funding from the federal government's formula grant program, states were required to examine the availability and effectiveness of services for females in their state (Section 223 (a)(8) of the JJDP Act, as amended in 1992). At the same time, another requirement instructed states to assess the frequency of detainment for females who commit status offenses versus the detainment of males for similar offenses, as well as to assess the appropriateness of the placement and confinement conditions for females (Section 248 (b)(3)(A)(i & ii) of the JJDP Act, as amended in 1992).

At the same time, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) initiated Challenge Activity E Grants that provide funding for improvements, specifically targeting gender equity in resource allocation (Bownes & Albert, 1996). The government wanted states to establish programs to ensure female youth have access to the full range of health and mental health services, treatment for physical or sexual assault and abuse, self-defense instruction, education in parenting, education in general, and other training and vocational services (Maniglia, 1997).

After the reauthorization of the JJDP Act in 1992, 23 states began to assess their programming for female offenders (Girls Inc, 1996 as cited in MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001). In September 2001, the Texas legislature enacted a bill designed to ensure that agencies in Texas providing services to female juvenile offenders periodically assessed "the nature, extent, and effectiveness of service offered for females under 18 years of age" (Equal Access to Facilities, Services, and Treatment Act, Section 531.016

(c)(1)). In 1998, Chesney-Lind, Kato, Koo & Fujiwara-Clark reviewed state-based initiatives for female offenders and found that although most of the states who had received funding were utilizing these monies to collect data on the basic needs of the girls under their care; only 8 states had actually created new programs or expanded existing programs for female offenders; and only 2 states had begun to develop legislation to address female delinquents (as cited in MacDonald et al., 2001).

The limited progress made by states during the 6-year period following the reauthorization of the JJDP Act in 1992 was not necessarily a concern due to the fact that, despite the new reform aimed at females, there were no measures in place to assure that the programs initiated for females would actually provide improvements (Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000). Therefore, the larger goal was, and still is, to determine the most effective method of understanding, planning, and implementing system-wide change aimed at female offenders across the United States (Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000).

Since 1992, Congress has repeatedly addressed and attempted to overhaul the JJDP Act, and several times there have been attempts to remove the provisions that could benefit female offenders (MacDonald et al., 2001). Fortunately, the latest reauthorization of the JJDP Act in 2002 again stipulated that the formula grant to states maintains critical focus on programs to provide services to girls in the juvenile justice system (Child Welfare League of America, 2002).

### 1.5 Female Juvenile Delinquency in Texas

According to the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission (TJPC) there is an ever growing population of female juvenile offenders in Texas; in 2000, 3,609 female

offender cases were referred to probation departments for felony offenses as compared with 2,817 cases in 1990, a 28.1% increase (TJPC, 2002). According to statistics from the Texas Department of Public Safety, female juvenile arrests increased by 35.5% compared to 12.0% for males in the period 1990 to 2000, and the total female referrals to juvenile probation departments increased by 36.8% compared to 8.4% for males (TJPC, 2002).

According to TJPC (2002), in 2000, the typical Texas female juvenile delinquent was 14½ years old and her ethnic background ranged from Anglo (40%), Hispanic (37%), and African American (22%) descent. “Over half of all females were referred for a misdemeanor offense with CINS (Conduct Indicating a Need for Supervision probation) offenses coming in second (37.8%)” (TJPC, 2002). During the same reporting period, Texas’ females were most often referred for runaway (26.4%), misdemeanor theft (15.1%), and assault (9.2%) (TJPC, 2002).

In January 2001, The Texas Juvenile Probation Commission surveyed the probation departments in Texas to determine the needs profile of the state’s female juvenile offenders. The environmental needs affecting these females were categorized into four groups: emotional health (mental health, mental retardation, and chemical dependency), physical health (health needs, pregnancy services, and eating disorders), behavioral (runaway, truancy, suicide, violence/aggression, and gangs), and self-enhancement (self-esteem, relationships, family support, parenting, abuse, vocational training, mentoring, and assertiveness) (TJPC, 2002). The following results are for all of the probation departments in Texas: 94% have chemical dependency needs; 90%

have mental health needs; 89% had females with truancy needs; 87% with runaway needs; 86% with violence/aggression needs; 79% with suicide prevention needs; 93% had family support services needs; and 85% reported abuse counseling needs (TJPC, 2002). In addition, “over 90% of the departments stated that they provided comprehensive assessment services for the youth referred to their programs;” yet less than 5% had a gender-specific method for assessing needs (TJPC, 2002, p. 38).

Furthermore, most departments indicated that their provision of services for female adolescents were almost always inadequate compared to the need levels and their comments indicate that a range of barriers to services for females exist (TJPC, 2002). Yet ironically, the majority of departments that responded to the survey indicated that their current services were adequate and no difference in accessibility of these services for females and males existed (TJPC, 2002). Thus, these statements appear to be in direct contrast with each other. In sum, it appears that most of Texas’ probation departments either do not adequately understand the needs of their female offenders, they do not adequately assess the needs of the female offenders in their area, or they do not adequately address the needs of the female offenders in their area.

Finally, with regards to recent research on female juvenile delinquents, of the empirical studies conducted with female juvenile offenders in the United States since 1992, only one study has strictly utilized data collected in Texas; the study was conducted by Christian Molidor (1996) and included 15 female gang members from Texas and New Mexico. Therefore, there is a void in empirical knowledge regarding female juvenile delinquents in Texas.

## 1.6 Statement of the Problem

The population of female juvenile offenders in the United States continues to grow in size, concern, and violent tendencies. According to the American Bar Association “over the past two decades we have witnessed an exponential rise in the number of girls in detention facilities, jails and prisons; likewise, arrest rates for girls in almost all offense categories have outstripped that of boys over this same time period” (American Bar Association et al., 2001, p. 1). As stated earlier, empirical research regarding the risk factors leading to a female adolescent’s involvement in delinquent activities has produced a somewhat composite picture of America’s female juvenile delinquent. According to one researcher, “while the literature is incomplete and warrants further development, even the literature that currently exists could be used more effectively to guide prevention and intervention efforts at critical life/developmental stages” (Guerra, 1998 as cited in OJJDP, 2003). Unfortunately, juvenile probation departments in Texas have not yet utilized the research findings to assess the needs or to provide more efficient services to the female offenders in their service area. In summary, according to Sondheimer (2001) “given the multitude of risks associated with juvenile delinquency and the detrimental lifetime outcomes such a course may likely take, comprehensive approaches to understanding and providing services for this [female] population of youths is paramount” (p.87). It is based on this recommendation that this current research project has taken its shape.

### 1.7 Importance of Issue to Social Work

The topic of female juvenile delinquency is an issue that should be of concern to researchers from a variety of academic disciplines, including but not limited to: criminal justice and criminology; social work; sociology; psychology; and women's studies. The rationale for utilizing a social work perspective to address this problem comes from the social work approach of viewing a person within their environment and the conceptualization that a person's environment has a great impact on the person that they are and will become (Zastrow, 2003). With regards to female juvenile offenders, social workers recognize the influence of environmental factors, such as family, neighborhood, friends, school, and community. Yet a social worker not only recognizes the influence of these factors, but also the strengths and assets that these components can provide to the at-risk young woman. Based on strengths, a social worker should be able to design an individualized intervention plan that best meets the needs of the young woman and assists here in the development of problem solving skills that can be used throughout her lifetime.

The issue of female juvenile delinquency is also of concern to the social work profession because many of these young women come from families that have previously been served by other social service agencies, including child protective services, probation and parole services, mental health organizations, and child welfare agencies (Acoca, 1998; Davies & Windle, 1997; Offord, Boyle, & Racine, 1991; Walrath, Ybarra, Holden, Manteuffel, Santiago, & Leaf, 2003). Therefore, the possibility for earlier interventions exists and could allow social workers the



opportunity to address female juvenile offending through prevention rather than intervention methods.

Finally, the topic of female juvenile offending is important to the profession of social work, because this at-risk population of young women appears to have been forgotten. According to the preamble to the Code of Ethics for the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), “the primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (NASW, 1999). Yet, as was mentioned earlier and will be discussed throughout this report, there is a lack of resources available to assist in the treatment of these young women (TJPC, 2002) and social workers possess the abilities and skills to assist and enhance the prevention and treatment intervention efforts with this at-risk population.

### 1.8 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the risk factors influencing juvenile delinquency for females in Dallas County, Texas and discuss the implications of the findings for future practice, policy, and research areas. This study proposed to do the following:

1. Examine the risk factors influencing female adolescents to be referred to the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department, including their experiences in the following areas:

- a. Their relationships with their family members and the environment of their home.
  - b. Their relationships and activities with their friends.
  - c. Their level of education and their experiences within the educational setting.
  - d. Their history of substance abuse.
  - e. Their current emotional functioning and coping mechanisms.
  - f. The state and impact of the neighborhoods and communities in which they have been raised.
  - g. The situation surrounding their current and past referrals to the detention center.
2. Discuss implications for practice, policy, and research options that could best address the needs of female juvenile offenders and the needs of the community in the Dallas County area.

Chapter 2 will review the empirical literature relating to risk factors associated with criminal behavior in juvenile female offender populations, treatment of female juvenile delinquents by the criminal justice system, and the standardized tools available to assess the needs and risk factors of female adolescents.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is intended to review the empirical literature relating to risk factors associated with criminal behavior in the juvenile female offender populations and the standardized tools available to assess the needs and risk factors of female adolescents. The risk factors associated with female juvenile offending come from a multitude of entities within each offender's environment; therefore, the risk factors will be categorized to better understand the variety of dynamics. Initially, the methods, parameters and rationale of the studies included will be outlined.

#### 2.1 Methods for Empirical Review

Studies chosen for this analysis had to consider females between 5 and 21 years of age, employ a racially diverse sample, define an offender as a person who had at least one lifetime arrest, and provide empirically based research data regarding characteristics of female juvenile offenders in the United States. Computer searches of the databases Academic Search Premier, Criminal Justice Periodicals, EBSCOhost, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest, Science Direct, and the United States Department of Justice were conducted to locate published articles utilizing samples collected from 1992 to the present using the following key words: female delinquency, juvenile crime, female offenders, recidivism, girls crime, risk factors, female juvenile offenders, female gangs, federal juvenile policy, and prediction of violence. In

addition, as articles were obtained, their bibliographies were explored to identify additional studies regarding the target population. Finally, the World Wide Web provided multiple resources regarding the topic, however, much of the information available was offered through non-profit and for-profit organizations that have not had their publications peer reviewed; therefore, these organizations were strictly used as a supportive resource for bibliographical information.

## 2.2 Methodological Concerns

For this analysis, 1992 was selected as the starting point for sample data collection because of the changes in federal policies regarding female offenders that occurred when the JJDP Act was reauthorized. In addition, due to the relative scarcity of empirical research regarding female offenders, studies conducted with professionals who work with female juvenile offenders were included in this analysis to provide corroboration for the female juvenile offenders' backgrounds and experiences.

Due to the relative novelty of research regarding female juvenile delinquent behaviors, there is a great degree of variability in the empirical studies included in this analysis. Studies investigating juveniles often vary in their considered age range; some studies included young adults (over the age of 21) as juveniles and others limited juveniles to a given age (most frequently younger than 18 years of age). Moreover, much of the research available only reported the increase in female involvement within the criminal justice system; these studies generally paid very little attention to risk factors leading to delinquency or the increase in female offending rates. Another concern was the relative comparability of studies; in the area of juvenile crime, studies

differ on which types of offenses are considered to be delinquent, the era of data collection, the types of risk factors considered to lead to delinquency, and the definition of juvenile.

Due to the constraints listed above, the ability to generalize conclusions from this empirical review is quite limited. However, these studies have provided ample data to determine risk factors that can be utilized as predictor variables. Ultimately, 29 published studies, representing 29 unique samples, were identified as meeting criteria for inclusion in this analysis. A brief summary of the included articles has been outlined in a table (Appendix A).

### 2.3 Description of Studies

Due to the newness of research into the field of female juvenile offenders, all of the studies included are non-experimental and focus on the development of knowledge regarding this population through exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory research. During the exploratory process of research, studies investigate a new area, about which little is known, in an attempt to generate new insights and hypotheses that will provide greater understanding regarding the subject matter or population and during the descriptive process of research, studies seek to portray accurately the characteristics of a population (Rubin & Babbie, 2001).

### 2.4 Types of Studies

In this current empirical review, 16 of the 29 studies took an exploratory approach in an attempt to identify and clarify risk and protective factors for female juvenile delinquency and gang involvement (Bachman et al., 2002; Belknap et al., 1997;

Bloom et al., 2002; Cauffman, Feldman, Waterman & Steiner, 1998; Esbensen et al., 1999; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Goldstein et al., 2003; Hipwell, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, Keenan, White & Kroneman, 2002; Kakar et al., 2002; Kataoka, Zima, Dupre, Moreno, Yang & McCracken, 2001; McKnight et al., 2002; Molidor, 1996; Shulmire, 1996; Walrath et al., 2002; Wang, 2000) while another study explored risk factors associated with recidivism among female juvenile offenders (Archwamety & Katsiyannis, 1998). Some of the studies examining risk factors for female delinquency specifically examined the relationship between alcohol, drugs, and delinquency (Bachman et al., 2002; Goldstein et al., 2003; Kataoka et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2000) while other studies considered topics surrounding gang involvement by female juveniles (Esbensen et al., 1999; Joe et al., 1995; Molidor, 1996; Shulmire, 1996; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Wang, 2000).

Several studies took a descriptive approach to examine relationships within the female adolescent's family that might lead to a girl developing delinquent tendencies (Davies & Windle, 1997; Kerpelman & Smith, 1999). Other studies scrutinized gender differences in delinquent activities, treatment needs, and treatment by the criminal justice system (Chamberlain et al., 1994; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2000; Miller, 1994); one study even examined different categories of delinquency (Wallace Goddard et al., 2000). While other studies: explored the treatment and abuse of female juvenile offenders inside the correctional system (Acoca, 1998); identified different communication styles of female adolescent offenders (Sanger, Creswell, Schaffart, Engelbert & Opfer, 2000); and identified perceptions of

risk factors associated with female delinquency (Pugh-Lilly, Meville & Poulin, 2001; Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001). Finally one study developed and discussed an intervention targeting female juvenile offenders (Emerson & Shelton, 2001).

### 2.5 Sample Collection Methods

For most studies utilized in this analysis, the samples were based upon non-probability and convenience, sample sizes were typically small, and data collection was primarily done either qualitatively or through mixed qualitative and quantitative methods. Examples of mixed method data collection include the Kakar (2002) study where official records were reviewed and focus groups conducted with female juveniles housed in a detention center, while other studies, such as the Kempf-Leonard (2000) study utilized official data for male and female juvenile offenders, focus groups with female juvenile delinquents, and survey data from juvenile court personnel and service providers.

Face-to-face interviews and/or questionnaires were the predominant means of data collection, however, in some cases, focus groups with female offenders themselves and sometimes the professional staff that work with female juvenile delinquents (Belknap et al., 1997; Bloom et al., 2002; Kakar et al., 2002; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000) were utilized as the sample source. Occasionally, official records were utilized (Acoca, 1998; Archwamety et al., 1998; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Emerson et al., 2001; Kakar et al., 2002; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000) in the data collection process; self-report data were also used in conjunction with official records in all but one of these cases (Archwamety et al., 1998).

Numerous studies utilized ex post facto information by gathering data from incarcerated females (Acoca, 1998; Archwamety et al., 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Cauffman et al., 1998; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Goldstein et al., 2003; Kakar et al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2000; Miller, 1994; Molidor, 1996; Sanger et al., 2000) while other studies utilized data collected through a nationwide survey (Bachman et al., 2002; McKnight et al., 2002). Several studies gathered information from outside sources, including family members (Davies et al., 1997; Hipwell et al., 2002; Kerpelman et al., 1999; McKnight et al., 2002), teachers (Hipwell et al., 2002), and personnel within the corrections system (Bloom et al., 2002; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000).

Additionally, in studies where quantitative methods were employed, there were few measurement tools utilized due to the shortage of standardized measurements available to assess risk factors related to female juvenile delinquency. The most commonly used standardized measurement tool is the Self-Reported Delinquency scale or a modified version of the same tool (Davies et al., 1997; Pugh-Lily et al., 2001); other studies that employed quantitative methods typically utilized surveys created by the author (Esbensen et al., 1999; Wallace-Goddard et al., 2000; Wang, 2000). The paucity of standardized tools available to assess female juvenile delinquency is directly related to the fact that most of the assessment instruments for juvenile offending have typically been developed solely on male models of criminal tendencies and few instruments have even included females in their normative population. Therefore, most authors have resorted to creating their own instrument or using a combination of data



collection tools in order to gather information regarding the gamut of risk and protective factors (Davies et al., 1997; Goldstein et al., 2003; Hipwell et al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Shulmire, 1996). For example, Goldstein et al., (2003) employed a combination of standardized measurements when they utilized the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI), Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI), and the Child Behavior Checklist – Youth Self-Report (YSR). In this example, by utilizing this combination of tools, the authors were able to assess a variety of mental health symptoms of the female respondents.

### 2.6 Sample Sizes

Sample sizes typically were small, but they ranged from: under 20 (Molidor, 1996; Pugh-Lilly et al., 2001; Sanger et al., 2000), under 100 (Archwamety et al., 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Cauffman et al., 1998; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Emerson et al., 2001; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Kerpelman et al., 1999; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001;), under 1000 (Acoca, 1998; Davies et al., 1997; Goldstein et al., 2003; Wang, 2000), under 3000 (Bachman et al., 2002; Hipwell et al., 2002; McKnight et al., 2002; Miller, 1994; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000; Walrath et al., 2002), 5,935 (Esbensen et al., 1999), 15,237 (Kim et al., 2000), to 128,802 persons (Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000). Thus, most studies utilized samples under 100 respondents and most studies were conducted on females only (Acoca, 1998; Archwamety et al., 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Cauffman et al., 1998; Davies et al., 1997; Emerson et al., 2001; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Hipwell, et al., 2002; Kakar et

al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Kerpelman et al., 1999; Molidor, 1996; Pugh-Lily et al., 2001; Sanger et al., 2000; Shulmire, 1996; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Wang, 2000).

### 2.7 Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were utilized often to analyze the study data (Acoca, 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Bloom et al., 2002; Cauffman et al., 1998; Emerson et al., 2001; Esbensen et al., 1999; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Kerpelman et al., 1999; Molidor, 1996; Wang, 2000) although multivariate statistics (including logistic regression and ANOVA) were most commonly employed (Archwamety et al., 1998; Bachman et al., 2002; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Davies et al., 1997; Hipwell, et al., 2002; Kakar et al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2000; McKnight et al., 2002; Miller, 1994; Shulmire, 1996; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000; Walrath et al., 2002), and qualitative analysis was utilized in one study (Sanger et al., 2000).

### 2.8 Theory

One final element is that only two studies specifically identify the theoretical frameworks for their research (Emerson et al., 2001; Wallace Goodard et al., 2000). Fortunately, both studies identify social learning theory as a base for their research; although they do not agree as to whether to use social learning by itself or in conjunction with other theories such as strain or social control.

## 2.9 Demographics of Female Juvenile Delinquents

### *2.9.1 Race*

Out of the 29 studies included in this review, 24 reported the race of the respondents; in 12 studies the majority (almost one half or more) of female delinquents surveyed were Caucasian, followed by African Americans, and then Hispanic, Asian and/or Native American (Archwamety et al., 1998; Bachman et al., 2002; Davies et al., 1997; Emerson et al., 2001; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Goldstein et al., 2003; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000; Kerpelman et al., 1999; McKnight et al., 2002; Miller, 1994; Sanger et al., 2000; Walrath et al., 2002), in 6 studies, almost 50% or more of all respondents were African American (Belknap et al., 1997; Kakar et al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Pugh-Lilly et al., 2001; Walker et al., 2001; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000) and in the 6 remaining studies, the ethnicity of respondents was generally evenly distributed between African Americans, Caucasians, or Hispanics, (Cauffman et al., 1998; Esbensen et al., 1999; Hipwell et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2000; Molidor, 1996; Wang, 2000). In these 24 studies Asians, and Native Americans always made up less than 25% of all respondents; only one study was based on a primarily Asian and Pacific Islander sample (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995).

Much of the empirical research done prior to 1992 included a predominately Caucasian sample of female offenders, and these previous studies generally recommended that future research include a more racially diverse population. Fortunately, it appears that the research community has responded to these

recommendations, as a greater percentage of the more recent studies have included a more racially diverse sample.

### *2.9.2 Age*

The median age of most female participants was 15 to 16 years old (Archwamety et al., 1998; Davies et al., 1997; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Miller, 1994; Molidor, 1996; Pugh-Lilly et al., 2001; Sanger et al., 2000; Shulmire, 1996; Walker et al., 2001). One study (Hipwell et al., 2002) included a very young population (5 to 8 year olds) in an effort to provide information about early onset of disruptive and antisocial behaviors that are commonly associated with referrals to the juvenile justice system. While another study (Cauffman et al., 1998) included older offenders (up to age 22) that could be classified as adults, depending on which state or jurisdiction they reside within. Thus there is some variation in the way the term juvenile delinquent is operationalized by each of the studies included.

### *2.9.3 Gender*

Several studies included data on both male and female juvenile delinquents, and comparisons of gender differences within these studies revealed some noteworthy differences. They indicate that females tend to commit offenses less frequently than males (Bachman et al., 2001; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Esbensen et al., 1999; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2000; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000), females tend to be less violent (Bachman et al., 2001; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Esbensen et al., 1999; Joe et al., 1995; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000) and females

were more honest about their delinquent activities (Kim et al., 2000; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000). For instance, in the Kempf-Leonard et al., (2000) study, the data revealed that females represented 22.1% of delinquency and 42.2% of status offense cases for the years 1992 and 1995 within the state of Missouri; thus the male counterparts were typically referred for more serious offenses. Also, Kim et al., (2000) found that females were more willing than males to disclose past month and lifetime marijuana use than a matched group of male subjects.

These statistics on gender differences are consistent with virtually all police and court data from across the United States; therefore based on referrals, females commit fewer delinquent acts, are less violent, and generally represent less than 25% of delinquency cases. Yet, the fact that these data imply females are less involved in delinquent activities also may be the reason why females continue to be neglected in the area of programming and rehabilitation efforts for juvenile offenders. Unfortunately, by minimizing female juvenile offending, fewer programs target prevention and early intervention techniques, and subsequently, when the child is not cared for properly early on, they are more likely to get more involved in the correctional system as time passes. Consequently, it is likely that if females remain absent from programming and interventions for teenage offenders, the future data will reveal consistent increases in incidence and intensity of offenses committed by girls.

#### *2.9.4 Education*

Educational histories of female juvenile delinquents consistently reveal academic difficulties and/or failure (Acoca, 1998; Archwamety et al., 1998; Bachman et

al., 2001; Davies et al., 1997; Emerson et al., 2001; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Molidor, 1996; Sanger et al., 2000; Shulmire, 1996; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Walrath et al., 2003; Wang, 2000) and that a high percentage of female offenders are in need of special education services (Acoca, 1998; Archwamety et al., 1998; Emerson et al., 2001; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Sanger et al., 2000; Shulmire, 1996). Most female offenders were in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade or lower, having been held back for at least one year in school (Acoca, 1998; Archwamety et al., 1998; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Molidor, 1996).

Illustrations of these academic difficulties were demonstrated by the Molidor (1996) study, where only 3 of the 15 participants had completed the 9<sup>th</sup> grade; the Sanger et al., (2000) study where “8 of the 19 participants (42%) had received special education services at some point during their education” (p. 301); the Fejes-Mendoza et al., (1995) study where 43% of their Iowa and Montana sample and 53% of their Arizona sample reported being behind at least one year in school; and 42% of the Emerson et al., (2001) sample reported being expelled or suspended at the time of data collection. Of note, in a recently released Florida study, middle school failure was determined to be the most significant risk factor for girls’ repeat and person offending (Acoca, 2000).

Other educational concerns for female offenders related to perceived peer pressure and treatment by school faculty; many youth reported experiencing significant levels of peer pressure to participate in delinquent acts while at school or actually

committing delinquent acts while on school grounds (Acoca, 1998; Bachman et al., 2001; Kakar et al., 2002; Molidor, 1996; Pugh-Lilly et al., 2001; Shulmire, 1996). Shulmire (1996) found that gang-involved and at-risk adolescent women received more behavior referrals to the school authorities than non-gang-involved females. While other female respondents in this review of the literature reported that school personnel including teachers and administrators often did not help these young women when asked to mediate in a problem situation or for additional help in the classroom (Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Pugh-Lilly et al., 2001). In the Pugh-Lilly et al., (2001) study, “about half of the girls described incidents in which they asked for help from a school counselor or other school personnel only to be ignored or referred to another person, and then another” (p. 152).

In response to school difficulties, many of the respondents had been suspended, expelled, or referred to an alternative school as a consequence for their choices in response to school and/or peer problems (Acoca, 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Kakar et al., 2002; Molidor, 1996; Pugh-Lilly et al., 2001; Shulmire, 1996). Belknap et al., (1997) interviewed one young girl who reported being so severely sexually harassed at school that she had taken a knife with her for protection from her harasser, and when the school officials found the knife, she received her first referral to the criminal justice system. Acoca (1998) also found, in her survey of detained female offenders, that 85% of the girls had been suspended or expelled at least once from school and 92% reported between one and three school failures (suspension, expulsion, held back a grade, being placed in an alternative classroom, etc.).

Unfortunately, reports of school failure can be found across multiple studies and typically these school problems have created a domino effect, in that once these young women begin to feel victimized by the education system or are sent to alternative programs to address attendance or behavior problems, they begin to fall through the cracks in the school system, and eventually stop attending school, and turn to the streets as their mode of schooling. Once the streets become their classroom, many young women move from committing status offenses such as truancy to delinquent offenses like drug sales and prostitution in order to survive.

#### *2.9.5 Offenses*

Analysis of offense patterns reveals the non-serious nature (i.e.: running away, truancy, and incorrigibility) of the majority of these young women's criminal histories (Belknap et al., 1997; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Goldstein et al., 2003; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000; Kerpelman et al., 1999; Pugh-Lilly et al., 2001; Miller, 1994; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000; Walrath et al., 2003). Fejes-Mendoza et al., (1995) also found through an interview process that most girls had started a deviant episode by running away from home, and once on the run, they committed more serious and violent offenses as a means of survival on the streets. Consequently, some of the young women studied revealed high levels of violent offenses including assault, armed robberies, drug sales, and even murder (Archwamety et al., 1998; Bachman et al., 2000; Belknap et al., 1997; Cauffman et al., 1998; Emerson et al., 2001; Esbensen et al., 1999; Goldstein et al., 2003; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Kerpelman et al., 1999; Kim et al., 2000; Miller, 1994;



Molidor, 1996; Pugh-Lilly et al., 2001; Wang, 2000). A powerful illustration of this violence was revealed by one of the Belknap et al., (1997) study participants who indicated her first referral to the juvenile justice system occurred at the age of 5, when she had slashed her brother across the chest with a razor.

## 2.10 Empirical Findings

The specific demographics of female juvenile offenders tend to vary slightly from study to study, however, each of the 29 studies included in this review provide a composite picture of female offenders that reveals today's girl delinquents are from each race, tend to be between 15 and 16 years old, commit fewer and less violent offenses than male teenagers, experience difficulties in school, and generally commit status type offenses. Fortunately, these studies have gathered more than demographic statistics, and through a summative process, this review will provide an even more concise picture of the life stories influencing teenage females to become involved in delinquent activities; for a table of factors influencing female juvenile delinquency see Appendix B. The next sections will discuss this synthesis of research findings on female juvenile delinquents in three categories (a) personal and environmental characteristics; (b) family characteristics; and (c) the risk assessment tools available to assess female juvenile offenders.

### *2.10.1 Personal Characteristics of Female Juvenile Delinquents*

Empirical research regarding risk factors and characteristics of female juvenile offenders typically includes findings from at least one of the following categories: biological influences, psychological factors, and environmental stressors. In order to

systematically review the empirical literature, the personal characteristics of female juvenile delinquents will be discussed within these categories.

#### 2.10.1.1 Drugs

From a biological standpoint, current research has highlighted the risk factors for female juvenile offenders to include substance abuse and pregnancy. Many female juvenile offenders have a history of drug use or distribution; most studies report almost 50% of respondents had used drugs on a regular basis (Acoca, 1998; Archwamety et al., 1998; Bachman et al., 2000; Belknap et al., 1997; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Emerson et al., 2001; Esbensen et al., 1999; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Goldstein et al., 2003; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2000; Walrath et al., 2003; Wang, 2000). Kataoka et al., (2001) found that 71% of their 54 female respondents had a substance abuse problem with at least one illicit substance and Emerson et al., (2001) found that 89% of the 60 females surveyed had used drugs or alcohol in their lifetime.

The most commonly used substances by juvenile girls are tobacco, marijuana, or alcohol (Bachman et al., 2000; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Joe et al., 1995; Kataoka et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2000). Using a nationally representative sample, Bachman et al., (2002) found that 43% of male and female respondents combined had engaged in alcohol use, and another 37% had utilized at least one drug other than alcohol. Yet there was also a study where the female respondents indicated they did not use drugs or alcohol at all (Kakar et al., 2002) – nonetheless, almost all of these same female

respondents reported exposure to substance abuse either through friends or family members.

More importantly, it has been shown that female adolescents use drugs, alcohol, and tobacco for different reasons and at different rates than do male adolescents (Davies et al., 1997; Joe et al., 1995; Kim et al., 1997; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000). Davies et al., (1997) found that when comparing male and female adolescent alcohol usage, family disturbances were significantly stronger predictors of girls' delinquency and alcohol problems – the family factors with strongest predictors of girls' alcohol problems included parental stressful life events, low family intimacy, parenting impairments, and marital discord.

Another concern for the females who abuse substances relates to the prevalence of young women who also suffer from a mental health or emotional disorder in conjunction with their substance abuse (Acoca, 1998; Bloom et al., 2002; Davies et al., 1997; Goldstein et al., 2003; Kataoka et al., 2001; Walrath et al., 2003). Kataoka et al., (2001) found that 29% of their female sample reported substance abuse problems with comorbid emotional symptoms. In addition, Goldstein et al., (2003) found that 63% of incarcerated females sampled were depressed, 56.3% were anxious, and 71.7% reported clinical levels of substance use problems. Due to the multifaceted issues surrounding drug use by female juvenile offenders, almost all empirical studies recommend future research to include assessment measures to determine the level of influence drugs and alcohol have on the choices made by teenage girls as well as research into the affects of mood disturbances on their decision making skills.

### 2.10.1.2 Pregnancy and Motherhood

Continuing from the biological perspective, within the literature regarding female juvenile offenders, there is a limited amount of attention paid to teenage mothers. According to a 1997 report, “nearly 1 million American teenagers [about 10 percent of all 15 to 19 year old females] become pregnant each year; about 33% abort their pregnancy, 14% miscarry, 52% bear the child, and 72% of the pregnancies are out of wedlock (Maynard & Garry, 1997, p.1). In this review of the literature, several studies included respondents who were pregnant or parenting at the time of the study or had previously had a miscarriage or abortion (Acoca, 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Bloom et al., 2002; Emerson et al., 2001). In the Acoca (1998) sample, 29% had been pregnant at least once, 16% had been pregnant while in custody, and one respondent indicated she miscarried her child due to being cuffed and thrown against a car by a police officer. Acoca (1998) also found that of the girls interviewed who had been pregnant while in the juvenile justice system, 29% reported being cuffed or otherwise restrained. Belknap et al., (1997) found through their focus groups with incarcerated girls, that health issues and problems were of great concern and these young women wanted more information on a variety of topics including pregnancy, miscarriages, and sexually transmitted diseases. Thus, an encouraging note is that these young ladies in the Belknap et al., (1997) study and others recognize their need and want more information on health risks associated with sexual behavior, but simply have not been provided access to sexual health resources.

Unfortunately, several other studies included information about youth who were engaging in risky sexual behaviors including prostitution, unprotected sex, gang rapes, and exchanging sexual favors for drugs (Cauffman et al., 1998; Goldstein et al., 2003; Miller, 1994; Molidor, 1996). Molidor (1996) describes a female respondent's recount of "pulling a train" where the interviewee had sex with 11 male gang members in the same night as a gang initiation rite. Therefore teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases may be a bigger concern than this review indicates.

#### 2.10.1.3 Mental Health

Psychological characteristics of female juvenile delinquents tend to include symptoms of mental health problems (depression), problems with emotion management (anger and anxiety), as well as low levels of self-worth (self-esteem and suicidal ideation). According to Obeidallah & Earls (1999) "the experience of depression during adolescence is hypothesized to be a central pathway through which girls' serious antisocial behavior develops" (p. 1). Throughout the research included in this literature review, studies included findings based on youth who suffer from depression (Acoca, 1998; Archwamety et al., 1998; Davies et al., 1997; Emerson et al., 2001; Goldstein et al., 2003; Kataoka et al., 2001; Miller, 1994; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000) as well as respondents who reported problems coping with high levels of anger or anxiety (Acoca, 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Emerson et al., 2001; Goldstein et al., 2003; Hipwell et al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Miller, 1994; Molidor, 1996; Pugh-Lilly et al., 2001; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000). In the Archwamety et al. (1998) study that assessed factors related to recidivism for female juvenile offenders,

the authors found that 47.8% of recidivists had a history of suicide or depression versus 39.8% of non-recidivists, and although the difference is not statistically significant, the sheer number of participants with depressive histories cannot be ignored when developing rehabilitative efforts for female adolescents.

Furthermore, in the Wallace Goddard et al., (2000) study that classified adolescent males and females into differing degrees of delinquency, the authors found that troubled students, which tended to be younger, black females in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, were the least delinquent of the sample, but they reported feeling angry enough to destroy things and feeling depressed. This same group of troubled students also tended to drink beer to get drunk, engage in sexual activities, commit acts in order to fit in with their friends, and dislike school. Therefore, although they were considered the least delinquent of the grouping, they still reported feelings of depression and anger, and they are engaging in delinquent activities.

#### 2.10.1.4 Self-Esteem and Suicide

According to Obeidallah & Earls (1999) “depressed adolescents tend to be withdrawn, have limited interests, and suffer from low self-esteem” (p. 1); subsequently, several studies reported findings based on youth who suffered from low levels of self-esteem and self-worth (Acoca, 1998; Bloom et al., 2002; Esbensen et al., 1999; Miller, 1994; Shulmire, 1996; Wang, 2000) as well as self mutilation and previous suicide attempts (Acoca, 1998; Archwamety et al., 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Emerson et al., 2001; Goldstein et al., 2003; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Miller, 1994; Walrath et al., 2003). Of those studies reporting

youths' experiences of low self-esteem, Shulmire (1996) found that gang-involved adolescent women had significantly lower levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem than at-risk and non-gang involved women. While Miller (1994) found that 65% of her incarcerated female sample had thought of suicide at least once in their lifetime, as compared with 26% of the incarcerated males sampled. Miller (1994) also found that "more than twice as many females (56%) as males (26%) reported at least one suicide attempt" (p.135). Thus, young incarcerated females are not only experiencing low levels of self-esteem, but their levels of self-worth are impacting their decision making skills to the point that lethal options are often considered as a means of coping with stress.

#### 2.10.1.5 Environment

Within the personal characteristics category of risk factors influencing female offenders, the impact of a girls' environment can exert a powerful influence over her decision-making skills. Specifically, these young women often times are raised in areas of lower socioeconomic status (Acoca, 1998; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Emerson et al., 2001; Hipwell et al., 2002; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; McKnight et al., 2003; Molidor, 1996; Pugh-Lilly et al., 2001; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Walrath et al., 2003) where neighborhoods and schools are plagued with individuals who influence these girls to join in delinquent activities. According to Molidor (1996), "the majority of the young women's [in the sample] neighborhoods were rife with poverty, alcohol and drug use and distribution, and gang violence" (p. 253), and the opportunities to better their

situations were quite limited. Therefore, these women often turn to gangs and delinquent activities as a method of survival, both physically and financially.

#### 2.10.1.6 Peer Pressure

Regardless of the socioeconomic status of a child's neighborhood, numerous studies report that female teenagers experience strong levels of peer pressure (Bloom et al., 2002; Esbensen et al., 1999; Joe et al., 1995; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000; Wang, 2000) to conform to and engage in unlawful activities with their peer group. In an effort to determine both risk and protective factors for female teenage offending, Bloom et al., (2002) found that peer drug use and the availability of substances were important risk factors, while community service and positive peer cultures were important protective factors.

#### 2.10.1.7 Gangs and Violence

Often times these delinquent peer activities include gang-related actions (Acoca, 1998; Archwamety et al., 1998; Bloom et al., 2002; Esbensen et al., 1999; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Joe et al., 1995; Molidor, 1996; Shulmire, 1996; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000; Wang, 2000) and violence (Acoca, 1998; Bachman et al., 2002; Belknap et al., 1997; Bloom et al., 2002; Cauffman et al., 1998; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Emerson et al., 2001; Esbensen et al., 1999; Goldstein et al., 2003; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2000; Molidor, 1996; Pugh-Lilly et al., 2001; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001). Examples of these violent acts were illustrated by Molidor (1996) when he sampled incarcerated female gang members in Texas; he found that in order to join their gangs, these girls



had to endure some type of initiation ritual, including “walking the line (a beating),’ ‘pulling a train (sex with multiple partners),’ getting a tattoo, participating in a robbery, or participating in a drive-by shooting” (p. 253).

#### 2.10.1.8 Abuse by Non-Family Members

In addition, many of these female juvenile offenders reported being the victims of violent acts within their neighborhood, including having experienced some form of abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) by a friend or stranger (Acoca, 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Molidor, 1996). Acoca (1998) reported that from her sample of 956 female juvenile offenders, 56% reported some form of sexual abuse – within that 56 percent, 32% were abused by family friends or neighbors, 40% reported at least one rape or being sodomized, and 29% reported being seriously sexually assaulted by a boyfriend, partner, or date.

Finally, there were a number of studies reporting youth who experienced various forms of abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) however the perpetrator was not identified (Archwamety et al., 1998; Bloom et al., 2002; Cauffman et al., 1998; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Emerson et al., 2001; Goldstein et al., 2003; Joe et al., 1995; McKnight et al., 2002; Sanger et al., 2000; Walrath et al., 2003). An example of these statistics are discussed by Sanger et al., (2000) who found “63% of the delinquents [incarcerated female teenagers] experienced either emotional mistreatment, physical injury, physical neglect and/or sexual abuse” (p. 301). Therefore, despite the lack of perpetrator identification, this information is important and should be included so that the depth and breadth of abuse endured by these young women is understood.

Ironically, in Wang's (2000) study regarding Female Gang Affiliation, the data reveal that being physically or sexually abused is not perceived by urban female youth to be "an important contributing factor for a female to join a gang" (p. 626).

Obviously, from this review of the personal histories of these young women, there are several distinctive risk and protective factors that should be considered when discussing the characteristics of female juvenile delinquents and the environments in which they are raised.

### *2.10.2 Family Characteristics of Female Juvenile Delinquents*

One prevalent theme found throughout the literature regarding female juvenile offenders is that of families wrought with disorder, instability, and dysfunction. Families of delinquent girls are often more dysfunctional than those of male delinquents, and are characterized by high incidents of conflict (American Bar Association, 2001).

#### *2.10.2.1 Family Units*

While some studies included female offenders from intact biological or two parent family units (Bachman et al., 2002; Esbensen et al., 1999; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Hipwell et al., 2002; Joe et al., 1995; Kerpelman et al., 1999; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000), most studies revealed offenders from primarily single parent or divorced homes (Belknap et al., 1997; Bloom et al., 2002; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Emerson et al., 2001; Kakar et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2000; McKnight et al., 2002; Molidor, 1996; Pugh-Lilly et al., 2001; Shulmire, 1996). In the Esbensen et al., (1999) study of the differences between gang and non-gang boys and girls, the authors found that "half of

the gang boys and 43% of the gang girls reported living with both parents,” (p. 40), and “for White, Hispanic and other youth, gang members were more likely than non-gang youth to live in single-parent homes” (p. 40).

#### 2.10.2.2 Abuse by Family

Typically, the teenage female offenders had experienced some form of abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) or neglect from a family member (Acoca, 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Molidor, 1996; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000). One respondent in the Joe et al., (1995) study revealed that she had joined her gang in order to provide her some protection from her father’s physical abuse while a participant in Molidor’s (1996) study revealed that she was being sexually abused by her step-father, and if her uncle had been aware of the abuse, the uncle would have killed the step-father while drunk at Thanksgiving dinner.

An Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) report found that adolescents from families reporting multiple forms of violence are more than twice as likely as their peers from nonviolent homes to admit committing violent offenses (Wright & Wright, 1994). Girls often use drugs and alcohol to numb the pain of their childhood trauma; girls who are victims of sexual abuse are more likely to run away, and girls are more likely than boys to be arrested and ultimately placed outside the home for this behavior (American Bar Association, 2001).

### 2.10.2.3 Running Away from Home

Numerous studies also report that these female adolescents have high occurrences of running away from home (Bloom et al., 2002; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Joe et al., 1995; Kerpelman et al., 1999; Walrath et al., 2002). When Chamberlain et al., (1994) assessed 88 male and female foster care children, 56% of the male and 86% of the female respondents reported running away two or more times from home prior to their placement into foster care. Another important statistic in this review was found in the Kerpelman et al., (1999) study, where an undisclosed number of female interviewees had been adjudicated through the juvenile court system for running away from home. The reason why this statistic is so striking is that few if any juvenile offenders are adjudicated to probation for their first or second instance of running away, therefore, a safe assumption from this statistic is that those female youth who have been adjudicated for running away from home have demonstrated “repeat” referrals to the juvenile court system for running away.

### 2.10.2.4 Family Dynamics

Other important trends identified for these female juvenile offenders include problems with communication amid their family members and primary caretakers (Belknap et al., 1997; Bloom et al., 2002; Esbensen et al., 1999; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Kerpelman et al., 1999; Sanger et al., 2000; Shulmire, 1996; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000). Kerpelman et al., (1999) specifically considered the relationships between adjudicated daughters and their mothers; in their study, the authors found that “both mothers and daughters

typically reported ineffective problem-solving strategies, evidenced by poor communication, lack of conflict management skills, and a tendency to yell and/or isolate when angry” (p. 326).

Several studies also highlighted high levels of drug abuse within family units (Belknap et al., 1997; Emerson et al., 2001; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Molidor, 1996; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Walrath et al. 2003). When Walrath et al., (2003) gathered data from females participating in a community mental health program, the authors found that almost 72% of females with a history of conviction also had a caregiver with a history of substance abuse compared with almost 56% of females with no history of conviction. A somewhat common occurrence was reported by one of the female subjects in the Belknap et al., (1997) study when she told of how she struggled to abstain from marijuana because she saw her parents smoke in front of her.

Another family characteristic of these young female offenders is that typically a sibling or parent is or has been involved in gangs or the criminal justice system at some point (Chamberlain et al., 1994; Esbensen et al., 1999; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Molidor, 1996; Shulmire, 1996; Walrath et al. 2003). Fejes-Mendoza et al., (1995) report that 58% of the Montana and Iowa females sampled had one or more siblings that had been arrested or convicted of a crime. While Shulmire (1996) found that gang-involved and at-risk adolescent women had a family member in a gang more often than non-gang-involved women. Therefore, the pressure to engage in gang related activities and behaviors can originate from friends (as

described earlier) and/or from family members; consequently, if a young lady is able to resist the temptation to follow in her peer's footsteps, she may not be strong enough to resist her family's pressure to conform.

Other factors related to family discord that had an impact on the female juvenile delinquents sampled were: being kicked out of the house at an early age (Acoca, 1998), witnessing or experiencing domestic violence (Acoca, 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Davies et al., 1997; Emerson et al., 2001; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Molidor, 1996; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Walrath et al., 2003), and a harboring a sense of detachment from family members (Davies et al., 1997; Esbensen et al., 1999; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Shulmire, 1996; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001).

Along with this sense of detachment, several studies reported that females had joined their gang so that they could feel like they belonged to a family (Acoca, 1998; Esbensen et al., 1999; Joe et al., 1995; Molidor, 1996; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Wang, 2000). Through interviews with male and female gang members, Joe et al., (1995) found that the gang served as a surrogate family, and "in light of family financial pressures and limited time for parental involvement or supervision, it is not surprising that these young people feel a sense of isolation and consequently find support and solace among members of their group [gang]" (p. 422).

Finally, many respondents reported general problems such as discord within their family unit (Acoca, 1998; Belknap et al., 1997; Bloom et al., 2002; Davies et al., 1997; Emerson et al., 2001; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Goldstein et al., 2003; Joe et

al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Kataoka et al., 2001; Kerpelman et al., 1999; Shulmire, 1996; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001; Wang, 2000). An example of this general family discord can be found in the Kakar et al., (2002) sample where most of the young women described family environments where violence, instability, and chaos were the norm, and the respondents felt that they grew up in an untrusting environment.

This summation of family risk factors for delinquency support conclusions regarding the importance of close family or guardian relationships for girls, and imply that positive effects of the parental relationship, such as feeling accepted and respected by parents, are crucial for reducing delinquency in girls.

### *2.10.3 Standardized Assessment Tools*

As discussed earlier, there is a shortage of standardized measurement instruments available to assess risk factors specifically related to female juvenile delinquency; therefore, the studies included in this review utilized a variety of measurement tools. This deficiency in standardized tools to assess female juvenile delinquency is directly related to the fact that most of the assessment instruments for juvenile offending have typically been developed solely on male models of criminal tendencies and few instruments have even included females in their normative population. Therefore, this section is intended to review the measurement tools utilized in the studies that were included in this review as well as to review literature regarding tools that are available to assess risk factors for juvenile offending.

The most commonly used standardized measurement tool in this review is the Self-Reported Delinquency scale or a modified version of the same tool (Davies et al.,

1997; Pugh-Lily et al., 2001). Some of the other well known standardized tools utilized include: the Monitoring the Future Survey (Bachman et al., 2002); Weinberger Adjustment Inventory (Cauffman et al., 1998); Drug Consumption Questionnaire, Children's Depression Inventory, and Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (Kataoka et al., 2001); Self-Esteem Scale and Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Control Scale for Children (Shulmire, 1996); Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument, Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory, and Child Behavior Checklist (Goldstein et al., 2003); Children's Global Assessment Scale, Self-reported Antisocial Behavior Scale, and Children's Peer Relations Scale (Hipwell et al., 2002); Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales-III, Perceived Social Support from Family, and the Center for Epidemiology Studies Depression Scale (Davies et al., 1997); and the Student Questionnaire (Miller, 1994). The final group of most commonly used instruments are questionnaires created by the author(s), to be used with either females only or with both genders (Esbensen et al., 1999; Wallace Goodard et al., 2000; Wang, 2000).

In addition to the articles reporting studies utilizing standardized measurement tools, several articles have been published regarding the reliability of assessment tools designed to assess both male and female juvenile offenders (Davignon, 2002; Funk, 1999; Gavazzi, Slade, Buettner, Partridge, Yarcheck & Andres, n.d.; Heilburn, Cottle & Lee, 2000; Johnson, 1998), the reliability of assessment tools to determine levels of depression (Ehrenberg & Cox, 1990), and assessment tools designed specifically for female juvenile offenders (Ereth & Gramling, 2003; National Council on Crime and



Delinquency, 1999). Articles regarding the utility of assessment tools with both male and female juvenile offenders have two separate and conflicting results, one group of articles simply reports on the use of specific standardized measurement tools with juvenile offenders when female adolescents have been included in the normative population (Davignon, 2002; Gavazzi et al., n.d.; Heilburn et al., 2000; Johnson, 1998) while another article (Funk, 1999) reports of the disservice given to female juvenile offenders when they are assessed based on models normed for the male and female juvenile offender.

In Funk's (1999) article, she states that "instruments derived from a combined sample can work against females in two ways ... first, they account for less variance in female reoffending ... second, the combined instrument fails to identify most female risk factors" (p. 62). Funk also found that "analyzing the assessment model separately for girls yielded an entirely separate list of factors that predicted delinquency twice as accurately as the list of variables developed based on male data" (Sharkey et al., 2003, p. 472).

To date, only one assessment tool exists that has been based solely on the female juvenile model of offending, it is the Individual Girl Strengths and Needs Assessment/Reassessment tool developed by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. According to Ereth & Gramling (2003), "the Individual Girl Strengths and Needs Assessment is used to evaluate the presenting strengths and problems of each girl and her family, and to systematically identify critical problems in order to plan effective interventions" (p. 14). By assessing each youth and her family with an

assessment tool that has been normed on female adolescent offenders, the tool is better able to accurately assess the risk factors most likely influencing the young woman and therefore will help the treatment providers determine which risk factors need to be addressed in order to improve their rehabilitation efforts with the youth.

As the knowledge base of factors influencing female juvenile delinquency is increased based on empirical research, additional assessment tools will be developed in various regions throughout the United States. One of the main reasons to develop risk assessments throughout the United States is because “risk assessments developed for one population of offenders are often disseminated and used without regard to their validity for diverse populations (e.g., considering gender, ethnicity, and culture)” (Sharkey et al., 2003, p. 470). Therefore, in the long term, the results from this current study could be used to assist the Dallas County Juvenile Department in developing a risk assessment tool based on the risk factors that have the greatest influence on female adolescent offenders in Dallas County.

### 2.11 Limitations of Current Analysis

Regarding limitations inherent in the current analysis, one glaring factor that must be acknowledged is that half of the studies included a predominately Caucasian sample, yet multiple statistical reports note that “African American girls make up nearly half of all those in secure detention and Latinos constitute 13%” and “seven of every 10 cases involving white girls are dismissed, compared with 3 of every 10 cases for African American girls” (American Bar Association, 2001, p. 22). Yet not one of the 29 studies included in this analysis contains any information as to causes of the

disproportionate confinement of minority females or information on racial bias in arrest rates. By relying on samples that are neither ethnically reflective nor randomly selected from the actual juvenile female population, the levels of significance for many of these risk factors could be distorted as well as the fact that some risk factors could be overlooked. Fortunately, as noted earlier, it appears that the research community has acknowledged that predominately Caucasian samples are not representative of the typical population of female teenage offenders, and subsequently a greater percentage of the more recent studies have included a more racially diverse sample.

In research, theoretical frameworks are utilized to guide research and explain phenomena; all 29 studies reviewed attempt to describe, explore, or explain some facet of female juvenile offending, yet 28 of the 29 studies do so without a clear theoretical model. These 28 studies all employ sample selection methods, data collection methods, statistical analyses, and interpretations that follow theoretical assumptions. Thus, the conclusions reached by many of these authors are put into question because a supporting theoretical framework is not clearly stated. As stated earlier, only two studies specifically identify the theoretical frameworks for their research (Emerson et al., 2001; Wallace Goddard et al., 2000).

Another limitation is that the studies are geographically limited; all of the studies included were conducted with samples from the United States. Thus the distribution of these findings is limited to certain areas of North America, and may not be valid, generally speaking, in other regions and cultures. Fortunately, the international research community, including Canada, Holland, and Great Britain are

also in the process of developing a better understanding of the risk factors influencing their female adolescents to become involved in delinquent activities. Therefore, additional research articles from the international community can be utilized to lend additional support for the United States' findings or provide a challenging perspective. Should studies outside of the United States have different results in similar studies, future research could explore what factors have influenced the differing results, i.e. political, economical, or social impacts.

Further still, samples typically were taken from specific states, and thus extrapolation of the data as it applies to females in other states may be quite limited. Generalizations, even within the cities and states where the data was collected, will also be limited due to sampling methods utilized, and the absence of randomization. For example, only 2 of the 29 studies used random sampling (Bachman et al., 2002; Kakar et al., 2002;). The primary sampling techniques employed were purposive and most of the samples consisted of female juveniles either in a school setting or in a correctional setting. Thus, the analysis neglects information on dropouts, truants, and those offenders who had not been caught, or were not taken seriously by law enforcement officials. Should these elusive offenders have been interviewed, the findings might have reinforced or contradicted the results from detained females. In addition, the risk and resiliency factors that keep these young women out of the system could be developed into more pro-social coping methods that could help other abused females find better methods of survival.

Another concern regarding the sample relates to the wide range of age groups included. The concern that arises is that there are an array of maturity and developmental levels exhibited by such a broad range of age groups, and this variability in maturity and stage of development can grossly affect an individual's decision-making skills. Thus, the choices and crimes committed by a 12 year old will typically vary in nature and intensity to those committed by a 22 year old.

Finally, although several studies touch on community level influences that impact a female juvenile's choice to become delinquent, the research community typically neglects this area. One study that considered community level issues included data on barriers to program services (funding, lack of knowledge regarding services, and transportation) and the limitations of current services (programs to address victimization, treatment of substance abuse, and services for pregnant teenagers) (Bloom et al., 2002). Yet in order to fully understand systemic constraints and failures that impact female teenagers, future studies must take into account neighborhood and community factors that contribute to deviations from social norms, such as community policing policies that allow for more lenient treatment of female juvenile offenders and neighborhood norms that encourage deviance such as prostitution and drug sales or usage.

Despite the above limitations, because of the relative newness of research into this field, each of these studies have contributed to the body of knowledge regarding these teenage offenders, and can be utilized to create more rigorous and credible future research.

## 2.12 Conclusions

Each of the 29 articles included in this empirical review have contributed to the growing body of knowledge regarding the risk factors influencing female juveniles to becoming involved in delinquent and criminal activities. Almost all of the studies included report similar findings in each of the topic areas, with a few exceptions, yet much of the empirical research prior to 1992 found that female and male juveniles were getting into trouble for similar reasons or showed females had low levels of involvement in delinquent activities. Therefore, as time passes, standardized instruments are developed, and as theoretical perspectives are increasingly incorporated, researchers may find that the risk factors currently considered exerting the greatest influence on female adolescents are no longer in the forefront.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Female Juvenile Delinquency

Most of the existing theories on criminal behavior were originally based on male patterns of offending and have been modified to explain female deviance and crime. However, the very adaptation of these theories to female juvenile offenders is symptomatic of the secondary importance female offenders have endured since the advent of criminology. One author has referred to this practice as “second-rate theories for the second sex” (Campbell, 1981, p. 36). Subsequently, many modern empirical studies of female juvenile offenders note that a theoretical model or explanation has not been employed in their study because of a lack of consensus among the research community as to which, if any, theoretical model can be utilized to effectively explain female offending patterns and rates.

Most of the theories used to explain deviant behaviors have been around for many years, even centuries, and over time some theories have lost their credibility and plausibility. More recently, as academics began to conduct research regarding female offenders, the application of traditional theories has been criticized because the theories either do not effectively explain female offending rates, or the application of specific theories often concludes there are no real differences in factors influencing the gender

differences in deviance. Nevertheless, traditional theories continue to be utilized in modern research in order to facilitate the development of a theory or theories that can effectively explain factors and differences influencing female acts of deviance.

The theoretical models are currently being used to guide research by social scientists with offender populations and can be classified into three primary paradigms; they are biological, psychological and sociological. Within each paradigm, there are a variety of theories that have been and will continue to be adapted to female offending. Initially, in this chapter, the primary paradigms will be reviewed and critiqued on their applicability to female offenders. Then the Ecological Systems Perspective will be evaluated and appraised for its application with female juvenile offenders in an effort to better understand the variety of influences impacting a female adolescent's choice to become delinquent.

### *3.1.1 Biological Paradigm of Crime*

The biological paradigm of crime assumes “behavior is at least partially a product of natural, inborn traits or tendencies – that is, predispositions” (Shoemaker, 1996, p. 227). In addition, “modern biological theories in criminology ... argue that certain biological characteristics increase the probability that individuals will engage in certain types of behaviors, such as violent or antisocial behaviors, that are legally defined as criminal or delinquent” (Diana Fishbein, as cited in Vold, Bernard, and Snipes, 2002, p. 31). The concepts of biological factors influencing criminality include: physical appearance, deformities, body physique, siblings (including twins and birth order), neurological issues, hormones, and body systems. In this chapter, not all of



these factors will be discussed due to the lack of empirical evidence supporting their ability to explain general delinquency and forces influencing female offenders.

The “father” of criminology, Cesare Lombroso, first wrote about female offenders in 1895; he maintained all females were lacking in sensitivity, childlike, morally deficient, jealous, and vengeful (Shoemaker, 1996). Lombroso reasoned these negative traits in non-deviant women were balanced by maternity, lack of passion, and low intelligence, yet, in criminal women, these qualities yielded a “‘born criminal more terrible than any man,’ a ‘double exception’ to civilized behavior” (Lombroso and Ferrero, 1895, p. 151, as cited in Shoemaker, 1996, p. 227) and therefore produced a woman who possessed a malicious inclination that she used to victimize others. Lombroso and Ferrero (1959) also suggested women have a less active cerebral cortex, therefore, they are less able to reason, more passive, and less inclined to crime than men; therefore, implying women are not smart enough, do not care enough, and do not have the strength to commit a criminal act. Over the years since Lombroso was first published, empirical studies have attempted to prove Lombroso’s theories were false, and it is commonly accepted that although these theories are interesting and there may be physical differences between men and women, deviants and non-deviants, there is no sound evidence to support Lombroso & Ferrero’s arguments.

Interestingly, were Lombroso alive today, he might posit female juvenile deviants to be a product of delayed maternal instinct development and therefore are more inclined to acts of deviance, and he might then predict that as these women age and develop more maternal characteristics, they would be “cured ” of their criminality.

While much of Lombroso & Ferrero's theoretical perspectives are difficult to acknowledge as legitimate by today's society, Lombroso also argued women would occasionally be inclined to commit criminal acts due to the frustration they experience in life as they broaden their education; as will be discussed later, this is one of the more realistic theories proposed by Lombroso and is closely related to today's feminist perspective regarding deviant behaviors (Shoemaker, 1996).

Another popular behaviorist, Cesare Beccaria, is associated with the Classical School of thought, which includes the concepts of free will, rational choice, and deterrence; free will represents the individual's choice in becoming a criminal; rational choice represents the belief that individuals know right from wrong and a criminal will make the choice to commit a crime, knowing it is wrong; and deterrence represents the notion that the punishment must fit the crime and be tailored to be just severe enough to overcome the gain offered by committing a crime. Beccaria (1764) (translated by Paolucci (1963), stated it is "of utmost importance that the crime and the punishment be intimately linked together" (p. 283).

Beccaria's criminological theory was based on answering the question 'what amount of punishment is needed to deter crime' (Vold et al., 2002). The answer to this question has changed over the years, as society alternates from focusing on rehabilitation to punishment. Hence the application of this theory is similar for men and women, since it is assumed both sexes know right from wrong and both sexes are free to make their own choices. In other words, if an individual chooses to commit a crime,

that individual must be willing to face the consequences, whether they are rehabilitative or punitive.

When Beccaria's theories are applied to female delinquents, one potential hypothesis is delinquents have the ability to choose whether or not to commit a crime, they know and choose to face the consequences of their deviance, and finally, the possibility of being detained for their transgressions is worth the risk. Yet it is quite difficult to believe female adolescents contemplating their first or fifteenth offense know right from wrong. Then, even if they do fully understand right from wrong, it is quite doubtful they know the potential consequences of their choices and understand exactly what is entailed with a referral to the juvenile authorities.

Developmentally, adolescents are experiencing a state of fluctuation whereby they are beginning to establish their own personality and independence from family (Allen-Meares, 1995). At the same time, adolescents are beginning to establish closer peer relationships, and often begin to depend more on their friends as a source of mental and emotional support than their families. Consequently, teenage girls may find themselves under the influence of strong peer pressure and temptation to rebel from their family's control; the end result is referred to as "feeding into peer negativity" and the girl chooses to commit a crime, which typically results in a notification of the police department or juvenile authorities. Thus, a teenage girl finds herself facing status and/or criminal offense charges for an action she may have known to be rebellious and deviant, but quite possibly did not realize was unlawful.

Finally, a common belief among teenagers is in their own invincibility; many teenagers thrive on the almost unrealistic possibility of getting caught, and at the same time, the thrill of the chase, and rebellion against the rules that have dictated their choices and direction in life (Pollard & Pollard, 2001). An example of this deviance occurs when a teenage girl decides to leave her house for the night; by leaving home, she is willfully committing a status offense. Therefore, she could be lawfully detained by the police department, petitioned to have committed a delinquent act, and taken home or to a shelter/detention center, however, it is doubtful she is even aware her choice is a crime, and even more improbable she understands the term status offense. Thus, the application of Beccaria's theory of free will and rationale choice can reasonably be applied to some aspects of female juvenile offenders, in that the child chooses to commit the crime, however, it is unrealistic to believe the child fully understands the ramifications of their choices.

More modern biological theories examining criminal behavior take into account how factors such as IQ, hereditary diseases, testosterone, age of menarche, and mental functioning influence an individual's deviance. Yet, although Lombroso and Beccaria's theories and the more modern biological theories can be utilized in explaining some facets of female juvenile offending, these theories do not account for the variety of sociological and psychological influences. Therefore, these theories are capable of explaining only a portion of why female juveniles become involved in the criminal justice system. A theoretical model that can explain the multitude of forces influencing female deviants would be much more informative and useful.

### *3.1.2 Psychological Paradigm of Crime*

As biological theories explain a portion of the reasons a child becomes involved in crime, psychological theories (also referred to as psychoanalytic or personality) “recognize the effects of an individual’s experiences, especially in early childhood, on one’s emotional adjustment and the formation of personality traits and types” (Akers, 1997, p. 35). With regards to female juvenile offenders, psychological theories explain how a girl processes and reacts to the emotional or mental aspects of criminal behavior.

One of the first theorists to address criminal activities was Sigmund Freud at the end of the nineteenth century (Shoemaker, 1996). According to the Freudian perspective, “the human personality is characterized by a struggle between the creative urges of the id and the constraining forces of the ego and the superego” (Jensen & Rojek, 1998, p. 188). Freud believed crime occurs when the superego fails to control the id, and therefore the id becomes dominant. Hence, using this rationale, a criminal act could be symptomatic of deep emotional conflicts and unconscious motivations; at a young age, a criminal may have not developed the ability to deter gratification, and, as a teenager or adult, the person is unable to sacrifice immediate contentment in order to gain future pleasure.

An example of this theoretical application with teenage female offenders may be reflected in a young girl’s inability to be “satisfied” in her relationship with her family, so she turns to her peers to receive attention and love. Unfortunately, by trying to get attention and love from her friends, she places herself in a position to be victimized or be the victimizer, so she can feel ongoing acceptance from her peers.

Now, in an effort to get acceptance and recognition, the girl may want to get involved in a relationship with a male peer, and because she cannot delay gratification she may choose to become involved with a male that does not treat her respectfully, or may even be physically abusive, but popular, so the girl wins popularity with her peers but sacrifices a part of herself. Unfortunately, if the youth had used more self-restraint initially, she might not have chosen to get involved with that particular male because of his reputation or maybe she could have found another boy who treated her kindly; if she had waited, then she might not have fallen victim to this violent relationship.

Another branch of psychological theories that plays an important role in explaining criminal behavior is that of learning theories, which include classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and differential association theory. Classical conditioning is typically associated with Ivan Pavlov and his “dogs experiment,” wherein Pavlov found he could condition a response (salivation) based on repeated use of a stimulus (the bell) used to signal the presentation of a goal or desire (food). In the field of criminology, Gordon Trasler applied some of Pavlov’s basic principles to explain how the learning experiences of children can affect their propensity to commit crimes later in life (Jensen & Rojek, 1998). Trasler’s theory indicated when parents respond negatively to a child breaking the rules at home, the child will experience anxiety, and this anxiety is a state the child typically wants to avoid; hence, the child will escape or avoid situations that cause anxiety, and therefore avoid deviant behavior that may result in punishment (Jensen & Rojek, 1998).

Unfortunately, Trasler's theory makes certain assumptions about the parents of teenage offenders, specifically, that the parents are involved enough in the child's life and supervision that the child can be caught breaking the rules at home. Often, as was discussed in the risk factors portion of Chapter 2, we find these youth live in families where the parents have issues with substance dependence, domestic violence, criminality, and economic hardships may make it impossible for the child's parents to supervise their actions. Therefore, if the parent is not home to supervise the child and correct the child's mistakes, then the child will not experience the anxiety associated with committing a deviant act and being reprimanded by the family.

Operant conditioning, another learning theory, is most commonly associated with the works of B. F. Skinner. Operant behavior is defined as behavior that is controlled by its consequences, and operant conditioning assumes an individual learns how to get what she wants from her environment (Jensen & Rojek, 1998). Stated another way, operant conditioning is the study of changing behavior by withholding of positive rewards. When this concept is applied to juvenile delinquency, it is hypothesized "juvenile delinquency is a learned behavior" (p. 194), and if juveniles receive praise for negative behavior, they receive reinforcement to continue the negative actions (Jensen & Rojek, 1998). However if juveniles receive negative punishment for their actions, they will cease to commit delinquent activities. For example, if a female juvenile receives praise from her friends for skipping school to smoke marijuana, and she does not get caught, she will continue to skip school until she receives a negative consequence for skipping or she will commit acts increasingly more deviant than just

skipping school. Yet, the consequences for skipping must be negative enough to cancel out the positive acceptance she receives from her peers through participating in proscribed activities. In order to reinforce positive behavior, her positive friends, family, or teachers must reward her with positive attention and acceptance for doing positive behaviors, such as attending school, or she will continue to skip to receive the attention and acceptance from others, despite the consequences.

Differential association, or social learning theory, is another learning theory, and today it is typically one of the most popular theories used in criminal justice research with juvenile offenders; however, academics do not agree as to whether it is considered a psychological, sociological, or combination theory. First introduced in 1939 by Edwin Sutherland, differential association/social learning follows the concept “a person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law” (Sutherland, 1947, p. 226). In layman’s terms, you learn your “definitions” or values and skills from your intimate relationships with others (family and friends); therefore if a family member or friend is involved in criminal activities then children will learn delinquent values and skills, in the form of criminal activities, are acceptable. This theory is quite plausible, considering one of the primary familial risk factors for female juvenile delinquency is one or more family members involved in criminal activities or the criminal justice system. For example, there are several studies reviewed in Chapter 2 that found female youth with parents, siblings, or 1<sup>st</sup> degree relatives involved in delinquent activities that provided poor role modeling or pressure to conform with the family’s deviance



(Chamberlain et al., 1994; Esbensen et al., 1999; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Joe et al., 1995; Kakar et al., 2002; Molidor, 1996; Shulmire, 1996; Walrath et al. 2003).

Other commonly discussed psychological theories of deviance include factors such as IQ, personality and psychiatric disorders, and developmental delays. Psychological theories provide many practical explanations regarding female deviance, yet these theories like biological theories only rationalize a portion of the risk factors associated with female deviance. In order to use psychological theories to explain female deviance, it appears an integrated model approach would be required to cover all risk factors. According to Akers (1997), “the goal of theory integration is to identify commonalities in two or more theories to produce a synthesis that is superior to any one theory individually” (p. 206). For example, differential association might be useful in explaining why teenage girls in gang-involved families also join a gang, yet the theoretical model would need to include elements of operant conditioning to explain why these same young women turn to drugs and alcohol to numb the pain of past sexual abuse from some of these same gang involved family members. In sum, there are a number of psychological theories that can be applied to the phenomenon of female juvenile offending, however, there are still a number of sociological factors that influence the decision making skills of female adolescents that have not been considered within the biological or psychological paradigms. Thus, the final theoretical model that will be reviewed is the sociological paradigm, which includes the most popular theories among female juvenile offender researchers.

### *3.1.3 Sociological Paradigm of Crime*

Criminological and sociological theories can either be categorized as being influenced by social structure or social process. Social structure is the study of where an individual is located, which is beyond the person's control. Social process is the study of where one acquires their values, how nurture influences crime, and how an individual gathers knowledge. Social structure is typically associated with social disorganization and adaptations to this disorganization; the key theorists associated with this school of thought include: E. Durkheim, C. Shaw & H. McKay, R. Merton, and R. Agnew.

In 1893, Emile Durkheim published *The Division of Labor* and in it he wrote about the concept of anomie where as people in a society distanced themselves from each other, the norms and expectations of their group became less clearly defined, thus, creating a state of normlessness or anomie, which would lead to deviance by certain members of the group. Durkheim (1938) also stated "crime is, then, necessary; it is bound up with the fundamental conditions of all social life, and by that very fact it is useful, because these conditions of which it is a part are themselves indispensable to the normal evolution of morality and law" (p. 87). If addressing female juveniles, Durkheim might suppose their deviance is needed so social order can be maintained in American cities and their acts of deviance are merely a reaction to their sense of normlessness within their group or community. Since Durkheim was first published, he has influenced the development of other theoretical models that are in part based on some of his original ideas.

One of the theories based on some of Durkheim's principles and one of the main social structure theories applied to female juvenile offenders is Robert Merton's Strain theory, which assumes crime is an adaptation to strain, and strain is adapted to in one of five ways: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion (Merton, 1938). For instance, a strain-based hypothesis regarding female offending rates is that these young girls who grow up in poverty stricken areas react to their economic strain by turning to prostitution and drug sales so they can get their needs met, regardless of the consequences. Unfortunately, this hypothesis may appear to fit well within the constructs of strain theory, but empirically, researchers have been unable to find empirical support for this notion. Over the years, strain theory has been highly criticized for lacking empirical support at the individual level; consequently, an adapted theory, the general strain theory has been proposed by Robert Agnew (Mazerolle, 1998).

Robert Agnew's General Strain Theory argues strain increases the likelihood of feelings of anger and frustration, and when an individual experiences these negative feelings, they will react in a variety of methods, including criminal behaviors (Agnew, 1992). In 1998, Paul Mazerolle applied the principles of General Strain theory to assess whether significant differences in delinquent behavior exist between groups of males and females. In sum, Mazerolle (1998) found a few significant predictors of delinquency for both genders; however, they were unable to compare differences between genders. Yet he was able to ascertain a few gender differences in the strain-related predictors of delinquency including noxious relations with adults predicts

delinquency for females and negative life events predicts delinquency for males (p. 84-5). In the end, Mazerolle (1998) found results similar to those of Steffensmeier & Allan (1996) in that while traditional criminological theories used in quantitative methods are able “to provide general explanations both of female and male offending patterns and of the gender gap in crime” (p. 482) yet “qualitative studies reveal major gender differences in the context and nature of offending” (p. 482).

One final concern regarding strain and general strain theories relates to the operationalization of the variable strain. Unfortunately the research community has encountered hundreds of types of strain, and each researcher or team may utilize different types of strain or may include different definitions of strain (Agnew, 2001). Therefore, studies including strain theories as their theoretical model have encountered problems when attempting to compare their results to other studies utilizing strain theory. At the same time, researchers are having trouble explaining why only some of the types of strain are related to crime (Agnew, 2001). Consequently, until the research community can agree on specific categories of strain, there will be a large range of variability in the application of strain theory to explain deviant behaviors.

Another social structure theory was proposed by Shaw & McKay in 1942 and dealt with delinquency rates in relation to types and characteristics of neighborhoods. In essence, the authors found “in the areas of low rates of delinquents there is more or less uniformity, consistency, and universality of conventional values and attitudes with respect to child care, conformity to law, and related matters” (Shaw & McKay, 1942, p. 193) and areas with the highest rates of delinquency had a wide variety of norms and

standards of behavior and consisted primarily of lower socioeconomic status inhabitants. Therefore, the authors concluded delinquency has its roots in the dynamic life of the community and the social values, norms, and attitudes to which the children are exposed (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Subsequently, when this notion is applied to female juvenile offenders, we would find females who live in the more impoverished areas of a community have the highest levels of delinquency. Unfortunately, even if this theory is proven true in several cities across the United States, the theory will be unable to explain why some females in the more impoverished areas turn to delinquency, while others maintain behavior deemed acceptable by the community and law enforcement officials.

Social process, the other category of sociological theories, consists of additional popular theories associated with research involving female juvenile offenders, which include labeling theory and social control/social bonds theory. Lemert originally formed labeling theory in 1951; however, it gained recognition in 1963 when Becker published *Outsiders*. Becker conjectures from the works of Lemert and Tannenbaum when he says “the deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label” (Becker, 1963, p. 264). According to Shoemaker (1996), labeling is effective in explaining initial acts of delinquency as well as lifelong criminality; subsequently, one of the primary concepts of the theory is the strong effect of labeling on delinquent self-images and behavior.

Labeling is commonly referred to as “the self-fulfilling prophecy” and supports the notion you will become what you are called or told you will become. For example,

if a child is called “stupid”, and her father tells her he wishes “she were never born”, she is more likely to run away from home, to associate with persons who show her positive attention, or to commit suicide. Several empirical studies provide anecdotal quotes from study participants that validate this notion in describing situations in their schools where teachers told them they were dumb and therefore not worth helping to complete school work as they were not going to grow up to be anybody anyways. Unfortunately, labeling, like so many other theories described in this chapter, only provides explanations for why a portion of female adolescents turn to delinquency to get their needs met, and fails to address a variety of aspects of female offending.

Another theory included in the sociological paradigm of crime is social control/social bonds theory; first introduced by Travis Hirschi, the theory “assumes that delinquent acts result when an individual’s bond to society is weak or broken” (Hirschi, 1969, p. 251). Hirschi (1969) assumed the individual’s bond to society consisted of four parts, including, attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Hirschi (1969) also assumed “that the beliefs that free a man to commit deviant acts are unmotivated in the sense that he does not construct or adopt them in order to facilitate the attainment of illicit ends ... and ... that there is variation in the extent to which people believe they should obey the rules of society, and furthermore, that the less a person believes he should obey the rules, the more likely he is to violate them” (p. 256). Accordingly, if a young lady grows up seeing her mother smoke marijuana, then when offered marijuana by her friends, she does not automatically stop and think to herself she is about to

commit a crime because she does not necessarily recognize smoking marijuana is wrong.

Another sociological theory which falls in line with Hirschi comes from Linden and Hackler (1973) who discuss the “affect ties theory that focuses on ties to delinquent peers as a source of delinquent activity, and on ties to conventional people in one’s environment as barriers to delinquency” (as cited in Jensen & Rojek, 1998, p. 232). In this same scenario of the young lady smoking marijuana, her peers offer her a source of delinquent activity and her family has failed to act in a conventional role as a barrier to drug use.

Most criminologists assess delinquency by analyzing the relationships among the juvenile offenders, their family, their school, and their neighborhood, both separately and together. For example, depending on the level of attachment a juvenile feels to her parents she may perceive her family has no commitment or involvement in her life and activities; therefore, she assumes the family does not believe in her or her abilities. The “domino effect” can then occur; for example, if juveniles feel their family is not supportive, then they will turn to their friends more often for attention and support, then they hear peers talking about how marijuana “makes your problems go away”, they then smoke, and when their families discover the drug problem, they further ostracize the child. Next, the perceived emotional gap grows larger between a family and its children, and the youths become more dependent on their friends, and marijuana, for attachment, commitment, involvement, or for a sense of confidence in themselves.

One other application of social control theory, specific to female juvenile offenders, relates to some of Lombroso's early ideas about women becoming initially involved in delinquency as a result of frustration they experience in life as they broaden their education, reacting with a perceived lack of equality with men in society. The notion of inequality in society as a major factor is more plausible when considering mature adult female offenders, however, the theory does help explain how the younger female teenagers react to abuse. For example, as was described in Chapter 2, large percentages of teenage female offenders have been subjected to physical, sexual, emotional or mental abuse, and often these teenagers feel powerless to stop the abuse. As a result, the teenagers may find themselves committing crimes as a coping mechanism.

Some examples of these reactionary behaviors include abusing drugs to control recurrent thoughts of the abuse, physically or emotionally abusing their children or siblings because this is the only way they know to relate to family members (and it gives a sense of control that is otherwise missing), or involving themselves in abusive relationships with peers or significant others because this is the only type of union they know. Furthermore, the female juvenile offender is often abused within the criminal justice system, but does not speak out against the abuse because of her low self-worth, fear of negative consequences of reporting abuse, or even the lack of an ability to recognize abusive treatment as such. This is an expansive example of the cycle of abuse girls' experience, which can lead to future adult problems such as eating disorders, domestic violence, suicide, or, ultimately, murder of an abusive partner. Yet



despite the extreme scenario, this story is all too common in the lives of America's female teenagers and unfortunately the stories will continue to become more severe as time passes if our intervention attempts do not effectively address the needs of these young women.

One final theory explaining female juvenile delinquency that deserves attention is the feminist perspective. According to Vold et al. (2002), "feminism is an extremely broad area of social theorizing that has applications to the field of criminology" (p. 267). In 1975, Freda Adler wrote *Sisters in Crime: The Rise of the New Female Criminal*, and in it, she "argued that women were becoming more aggressive and competitive as they moved out of traditional homebound social roles and into the previously largely male world of the competitive market place" (Vold et al., 2002, p. 269). Kathleen Daly & Meda Chesney-Lind (1988) argue criminologists are taking one of three approaches to building theories of gender and crime, these three approaches include the generalizability problem (applying male theories to female offending), the gender ratio problem (explanations for why men commit more crimes than females), and attempts to bracket the generalizability and gender problem together.

From the feminist perspective, female delinquency or criminality can be seen from several different schools including: liberal, radical, Marxist, socialist, post-modern, and multicultural feminism (Vold et al., 2002). No one school of feminism has been widely adopted, and each school continues to review and adapt their theories to female acts of deviance. Without one central feminist approach, numerous researchers call themselves feminists or claim to conduct research from a feminist perspective, yet

they each define and apply feministic principles to their research framework from different protocols; the end result is a wealth of feminist research that cannot be compared due to the variability in the definition and application of feminist theory. Therefore, while these theories attempt to explain a variety of the reasons why females become involved in criminal behaviors, the theories and their application are in their infancy, and need to be more rigorously explored through both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to truly determine if a feminist approach best serves as the theoretical framework needs for research with female offenders. Ultimately, the most plausible general theory to explain female deviance will probably be the result of combining principles from traditional criminological and feminist theories. At this time, the theory that best incorporates the variety of factors influencing teenage females to commit acts of deviance appears to be a perspective that incorporates factors from the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, and for this research project, that approach is the Ecological Systems Perspective.

### 3.2 Ecological Systems Framework

The empirical literature relating to female delinquents paints a picture of strain, abuse, pressure, and violence, therefore, the variety of criminological theories discussed above represent a glimpse into portions of the forces influencing a young girl's life, yet these theories are too narrow in scope. Rather than focusing on one biological, psychological, or sociological theory or a combination of these theories, a broad environmentally based theoretical model will be employed to address the risk factors for teenage delinquents.

Several social work authors have argued the importance of using an environmental perspective to discuss behaviors and decision making, therefore, it is hard to say exactly when the first perspective outlining an ecological approach was proposed. For this study, the theoretical framework will be based on The Life Model of Social Work Practice originally published in 1980 by Caryl B. Germain and Alex Gitterman, which includes theoretical influences from Erikson, Freud, and other famous theorists. The model was unique in it encompassed seven sets of ecological concepts, including: person: environment exchanges and relationships; varied levels of fit between people's needs, goals, and rights, and their environment's qualities and processes; life stressors that influence the level of fit; human relatedness, competence, self-concept, self-esteem, and self-direction; vulnerability, oppression, abuse or misuse of power, and social and technological pollution; salutary and non-salutary human habitats and niches; and the "life course" conception of non-uniform pathways to human development and functioning (Germain & Gitterman, 1996). As Germain et al. (1996) state:

From a holistic view, people (and their biological, emotional, and social processes) and physical and social environments (and the characteristics of those environments) can be fully understood only in the context of the relationship between and among them, in which individuals, families, and groups and physical/social environments continually influence the operations of the other. It must be remembered that this dynamic array of linked influences always occurs in a cultural context (p. 6).

From this perspective, there is not a single factor influencing the female adolescent, but rather an array of facets (in this case variables) influencing, pressuring, and dictating the choices she is making in her teenage years.

The ecosystems model will take these different facets into consideration, and because each child is unique and individual in their decision-making, there will not be a predetermined amount of influence or strength applied to the relationship each variable has on the teenager. Rather, in each child's unique situation, the individual, and the level of importance they put into each relationship and event, determines the amount of strength given to each relationship. In order to better understand how the ecosystems model fits with the topic of female delinquents, each of the seven components of the perspective will be discussed within the context of juvenile decision-making when experiencing pressure from a variety of sources.

### *3.2.1 Ecological Perspective Concept #1*

The first concept is the person: environment exchanges and relationships, whereby it is acknowledged individuals give shape to and are shaped by their surroundings; the idea of exchanges is defined as "continuous transactions between people and their environments, in which each shapes the other over time" (Germain et al., 1996, p. 9). The give-and-take influence shared by the person and their environment changes over time, developmental stages of the individual, and geographic locations. When applied to the issues influencing female juvenile offenders, the relationship between the person and their environment includes the influence of gang violence, drug sales and usage, poverty, and abuse by individuals within their

community. The person: environment relationship also includes the influence of neighborhood norms and standards; often teenage female offenders are raised in areas of lower socioeconomic status and the older females around them are responsible for role modeling appropriate adult or grown-up behaviors. For many of these teenage girls, the older women around them are engaging in deviant acts which often include prostitution, promiscuity, gang membership, drug use and sales, early motherhood, subservient behaviors to abusive or domineering males, and the list goes on. Therefore, when teenage girls see these types of relationships between women and their neighborhood, community, and environment, they are influenced by these role models and often will follow in some of the same paths as the women before them. Hence, the person: environment relationship is an important influence on the way teenagers learn decision-making skills, regardless of the nature of the environment in which they live.

### *3.2.2 Ecological Perspective Concept #2*

Another aspect of the person: environment relationship is the level of “fit between a person’s environment and his or her needs, capacities, rights, and aspirations,” and when there is a poor fit between these two entities, “personal development and functioning are apt to be impaired and the environment may be damaged” (Germain et al., 1996, p. 8). This fit between the person and their environment is considered to be the second concept in the ecological perspective and it addresses the person: environment fit, adaptedness, and adaptation (Germain et al., 1996). Germain et al., posit when a person fits well with their environment, both bodies will flourish, and conversely when there is a poor fit, the two may experience some

harm. At the same time, when a favorable fit exists between the person: environment, then there will be an adaptedness relationship that allows for the support of “human growth and well being, and preserves and enriches the environment;” yet when a favorable fit does not exist, the person may change themselves or their environment in an effort to improve the level of fit, this change process is referred to as adaptation. When an individual adapts to the environment or attempts to adapt the environment to meet their needs, a number of changes or behaviors can occur, including those from biological, cognitive, emotional, social or cultural bases. According to Germain et al., (1996):

Adaptations are active efforts to (a) change oneself in order to meet the environment’s expectations or its demands that are perceived as unalterable, or to take advantage of environmental opportunities; or (b) change the environment so that the social and physical environments are more responsive to one’s needs and goals; or (c) change the person: environment relationship in order to achieve an improved fit (p. 9).

Thus, from this perspective, the relationship between the person and their environment is constantly changing in an effort to maximize the level of fit between the two entities.

Attention will now be turned to the application of this adaptation relationship to female adolescents and their interactions with their environment. As was illustrated in the literature review, often times teenage girls who turn to crime grow up surrounded by anti-social values and influences, and these values and influences can come from family, friends, school, authority figures, and neighborhoods. Yet not every girl in

every crime ridden neighborhood in America turns to delinquent behavior as a way of life and not every female adolescent offender comes from an impoverished neighborhood, therefore, when trying to determine why certain adolescents turn to crime and others do not, we must consider the level of fit and type of relationship each girl chooses to have with her environment.

Young women who feel they have a favorable fit with their environment will flourish, whether that is in school, family, work, or with friends; the child may opt to attend school daily, she may spend large amounts of time with family, she may work a part-time job to help her family with expenses and she may spend time with other adolescents who participate in similar type behaviors. Yet there will also be children living within the same city block or sharing the same homeroom class who decide to skip school after lunch with their friends to go smoke marijuana, stay out well past their curfew, steal cars for parts to support their drug habit, and argue with their family members when encouraged to “straighten up.” The question that arises is why do girls (or people in general) from similar areas and situations choose two different paths; the answer is related to the child’s relationship and adaptedness to their environment.

Unfortunately, there typically is not one force that influences a child to commit a crime, nor is their only one force influencing the other child to comply with society’s rules. Thus in order to better understand the girls who turn to delinquency and the degree of delinquency chosen, we must always consider their individual interactions with their environment and any changes that arise when the level of fit or exchange is maladaptive.

### *3.2.3 Ecological Perspective Concept #3*

The next concept of the ecological perspective concerns life stressors, stress, coping, and challenge; specifically, “life stressors that threaten the level of fit and lead to associated emotional or physiological stress, and the coping tasks that require personal skills and environmental resources for managing the life stressor and reducing the associated stress” (Germain et al., p. 1). In terms of the relationships Germain et al. (1996) posit among these concepts, life stressors are referred to as a current or future harm or loss, which in turn causes stress than an individual must cope with; however, not all stressors will result in harm or loss, and those an individual feel they can master, are referred to as challenges. Germain et al., (1996) cite another theorist, Lazarus, regarding how the concepts of stress, coping, and stressors are interrelated in such a manner to form a paradigm and this paradigm takes into account a person’s characteristics and how that person operates within their environment. Thus, not only is the ecological perspective concerned with an individual’s level of fit with their environment, it is also concerned with how stressors, stress, coping, and/or challenge influence the individual’s characteristics and abilities to operate within their surroundings.

Put into practice with the notion of a female juvenile delinquent, the paradigm of life stressors and subsequent interactions within an environment can cover a variety of facets. One of the more typical applications involves the female adolescent who has been sexually abused by a family member or known acquaintance. Within the literature review for this study, several qualitative stories were recounted wherein a young girl



had been molested by an uncle or one of her mother's boyfriends for years, and as the child got older the scars from the abuse negatively impacted her level of self esteem and self worth. In turn, the child sought methods of coping with the stress brought about from the abuse (stressor) and often turned to drugs and alcohol as a means to cope or engaged in risky behaviors due to her low level of respect for herself or her body. In this example, the child was unable to cope with her stress and possibly adapted to her environment where she saw other children use drugs to "make their problems go away" or she may have joined a gang for protection from the abuse but then engaged in risky sexual behaviors as part of her initiation into the gang. Regardless of which coping mechanism the child chooses, the resulting behaviors are common examples of the activities that lead to a female adolescent's first referral to the juvenile justice system. Unfortunately, this example is primarily applicable to a child living within a lower socioeconomic community, however, the same stressors can be found in more affluent neighborhoods and the coping mechanisms may be the same. Therefore, regardless of the environment or neighborhood, children who experience stressors must find a means of coping with their stress and although some may challenge the stressor and become stronger in the process, there are many female adolescents that do not have the inner strength or opportunity to overcome their adversity, so they turn to anti-social or illegal methods of coping and even survival.

#### *3.2.4 Ecological Perspective Concept #4*

The idea of inner strength leads us to the next concept in the ecological perspective that pertains to "human relatedness, competence, self-concept, and self-

esteem, and self-direction that are positive attributes generated by past and current person-environment relationships” (Germain et al., 1996, p. 1) and how each component of the concept is interdependent on the others. To better understand their interrelatedness, each of these components should be defined. In this context, relatedness refers to an individual’s ability to form attachments, friendships, affiliations, and relationships; competence refers to an individual’s inner sense of self which is associated with their ability to seek and accept help when needed; self-esteem is the “extent to which a person feels capable, significant, and worthy of respect and love;” and self-direction is concerned with an individual’s sense of control and accountability for themselves while respecting the rights of others (Germain et al., 1996, p. 18). According to Germain et al., (1996), all of these components are initially formed and developed in the childhood years, and as a child matures the family and the community should support the positive development of these ideas, therefore, again the importance of the fit between the person and their environment is illustrated.

In the process of taking a closer look at each of these components, the relationship between the person and their environment will be further explored. To start with, the relatedness that is referred to in this context refers to the person’s level of and ability to form attachments, friendships, affiliations, and relationships; attachments to their family, friendships and affiliations with their peer group, and relationships with sexual partners (Germain et al., 1996). One of the most important development phases of attachment occurs when the child is an infant and is developing a relationship with their family and parents; for a strong bond to develop, when the infant displays

attachment behaviors (crying, etc.) then the mother should display a response to meet the child's needs. If the child's mother or caregiver does not respond to the child's attachment behaviors, then the child may not learn how to develop appropriate trusting relationships with others and may grow emotionally distant from others. If this bond is weak in childhood, then the child will later experience difficulties establishing friendships, affiliations, and relationships with others, regardless of their kinship.

As was discussed earlier, Travis Hirschi's Social Bonds theory illustrated the importance of a child's relationship and level of attachment to their family, their school, and their neighborhood; if the attachment to the family is weak then the child may turn to their friends, gang, or others in their environment for attention and support. If this attachment to the family is strong, the child will grow in a fostering environment where their values and beliefs are shaped by their families, friends, and neighbors; subsequently if a child has close bonds with these entities, then their adoption of similar values will typically occur regardless of whether the value structure is positive or negative. Thus, a strong bond to family, friends, and neighborhood does not translate into pro-social behavior and values; it simply implies the individual will likely adopt similar values as those with whom they share a bond. Therefore, regardless of whether or not a child develops appropriate attachment to their family or instead to their friends and neighborhood, the bond develops and there is a strong likelihood the child will adopt similar values and beliefs as those within their social and emotional network.

Now the focus will turn to competence and an individual's inner sense of self, which is associated with their ability to seek and accept help when needed (Germain et

al., 1996). Competence is related to the emotional development of a child in that as a child develops, they want to have an effect on their environment, and when they cry or display attention seeking behaviors that are responded to by family members or caretakers, then the child feels they have an effect on the environment. Thus when a child displays attention-seeking behaviors that are not noticed, then the child may determine they do not have any effect on their environment and may stop attempting to get attention from those around them in their family. Later in a child's development, if they have not developed a sense of self related to their ability to impact the environment, then they may not know to turn to those in their environment for help, thus, they rely solely on themselves and may not be capable of handling all of life situations that come their way. Ultimately, the child may not develop a sense of competence which eventually will impact their self image and belief in their ability to be successful in their environment.

This idea of low competence or lowered self-image relates to the final two elements of this concept in the ecological perspective, that of self-esteem and self-direction. As stated earlier, self-esteem is concerned with the person's sense of being worthy of respect and love and self-direction is concerned with an individual's sense of control and accountability for themselves (Germain et al., 1996). Thus, if a person has not developed a strong sense of self and confidence in their ability to impact the environment around them, then they may have a hard time believing they are worthy of having meaningful relationships with others. Furthermore, if early in their lives they were not given the support from their family during the development of their attachment

to others, then it is logical to assume the child was also not supported in the development of their decision making abilities. Thus, a child who has not developed confidence in their ability to make decisions for themselves or has not had adequate guidance in how to make pro-social decisions may struggle as they are allowed more freedom to make their own decisions. In sum, a child's initial developmental milestones are dependent upon their parents and caregivers; therefore, if the child does not experience a supportive environment they are likely to experience other difficulties later in their lives.

When the concepts of human relatedness, competence, self-concept, and self-esteem, and self-direction are applied to the lives of female juvenile delinquents, a key issue to be considered is the turbulent family life many of these young women experience during their developmental years. As was documented in the literature review, many of the delinquent young women who have been previously studied have come from families where poverty, drugs, violence, and abuse are the norm. Thus it is a reasonable assumption these young women often grow up in homes where they struggle to develop healthy attachments to family members; an example might include babies born to drug addicted mothers who are more concerned with getting high, staying high, and where to get their next high rather than what has caused their child to cry out for attention. Another assumption is because these young ladies are growing up in an environment where they do not develop healthy attachments to their families, they may turn to other people in their neighborhood for love and attention; other people may include other adults with drug problems, gang members, pimps, or abusive adults.

Therefore, no matter whether the child attaches to her family or those around her, most often the environment where she is being raised is typically filled with deviant behaviors being role modeled for her everywhere she looks.

Subsequent to the child's relationships with deviant individuals, she begins to develop a sense of her competence and efficacy; again, it is safely assumed she will have problems developing a healthy sense of competence if her environment does not respond to her needs and she is unable to determine if she is affecting her environment in any way. Unfortunately, the child may be able to decipher her impact on the environment but if she is treated as if she creates an undo burden on her mother or family, then she is likely to assume she will have a negative effect on her environment at home and may turn to the streets or her friends to have a more positive effect. Once the child begins to doubt her efficacy and competence, she begins to doubt herself and rather than developing healthy self-esteem regarding her abilities, she often comes to believe she is not worthy of love, she is not worthy of having meaningful relationships with others, and she has been "dealt a deck of cards" riddled with drugs, poverty, and crime, where her only choice is to adapt and acclimate herself and her choices to this lifestyle. In turn, her self-direction is focused on negative goal attainment that may include some of the same lifestyle choices her mother opted for which have played a major part in dictating the situation this young girl currently experiences.

### *3.2.5 Ecological Perspective Concept #5*

In 1996, Carel Germain and Alex Gitterman added three new sets of concepts to the ecological perspective, they include vulnerability, oppression, abuse or misuse of

power, and social and technological pollution; salutary and non-salutary human habitats and niches; and the “life course” conception of non-uniform pathways to human development and functioning. The power, powerlessness, and pollution referred to by Germain & Gitterman (1996) includes power being withheld from vulnerable groups based on personal or cultural characteristics (race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, or physical or mental conditions); the abuse of power leading to poor quality schools, unemployment or underemployment, poor housing conditions, homelessness, and poor health care; and pollution in our air, food, water, and soil. In sum, all of these factors, whether coercive or exploitative, have influenced the lives of female juvenile offenders and their families at a macro-level, whereby the opportunities afforded to them have been narrowed depending on their characteristics. Yet because the background characteristics of female offenders are so broad, it would be almost impossible to delineate which abuses of power at the macro level have had the biggest impact on female adolescent deviancy (and this is not the primary goal of this research project). However, it is safe to assume that because abuses of power have impacted vulnerable groups, which most female juvenile offenders fall under, it is safe to assume they have suffered from an abusive power relationship in some fashion.

### *3.2.6 Ecological Perspective Concept #6*

The next concept in the ecological perspective relates to habitat and niche; whereby habitat refers to the “physical and social settings of human individuals or groups”, and niche refers to “the social status occupied in a human community by an individual or group” (Germain et al., 1996, p. 23). As has been described throughout

this chapter and the literature review, many female juvenile offenders grow up in areas of lower socioeconomic status where crime, drugs, gangs, and violence are the norm rather than the exception, and thus the habitats for many of the female juvenile deviants in the United States include drug houses, shootings, prostitution, poverty, gang rivalry, and the list goes on. Therefore, the niche occupied by these young ladies is often determined by their family's choices and involvement in deviant behaviors, their neighborhood surroundings, as well as their own decisions regarding their level of involvement in antisocial activities. Other factors influencing a female offenders' niche include the macro level issues, previously discussed in this chapter under the power and powerlessness context, which might limit her aspirations based on her personal or cultural characteristics. Thus, the broad range of influences found within a female juvenile offender's habitat will help drive her choices and aspirations as well as encouraging her to aspire to certain niches that, although she may be capable of a much greater or prestigious niche, almost guarantee goals and a lifestyle focused on the attainment of anti-social values and behaviors. In sum, many female juvenile offenders are subjected to a variety of influences within their social environment, these influences occur at a micro and a macro level, and collectively these powers are capable of influencing all individuals into a life of crime or conformity.

### *3.2.7 Ecological Perspective Concept #7*

The final concept of the ecological perspective addresses the concept of life course and "refers to the unique pathways of development that each human being takes – from conception and birth through old age – in varied environments and to our



infinitely varied life experiences” (Germain et al., 1996, p. 21). Within the life course concept, Germain & Gitterman discuss the concepts of historical, individual, and social time, and how each area impacts an individual within their environment and impacts their decision making and “life course.” The individual’s life course can be influenced by: the historical context within which they are raised, for instance, today’s world provides new opportunities and less rigid expectations for women regarding school, work, home, and family life; their individual time, which, in this context refers to a person’s life story, and because the subjects in this study are teenagers, many of these women are just beginning to write the chapters in their life stories; and social time, which refers to life issues within the family, another group, or community that is closely related to the individual, and how their life issues impact the individual.

These various categories of time that affect a person’s life course begin influencing people at a young age, therefore, by the time an individual reaches their teenage years, they have been exposed to a variety of these time factors. For the female juvenile offenders in this study, the historical time in which they are being raised is full of opportunities for women that have previously been offered to men only. At the same time, these young ladies’ life stories and individual time is being influenced by a wider variety of factors, including, drugs, sex, and violence. When discussing social time and female teenage delinquents, the literature review helped to illustrate chaotic family and neighborhood lives that influenced these girls’ decision making as well as how often these young women turn to a gang or clique as a support system when they do not feel connected to their families. Thus, for female juvenile offenders, individual and social

time may be considered the most influential portion of an individual's life course, as they are beginning to write their life stories, and the unstable state of their environment leads to further instabilities in their life course.

Because the age range for the population in this study is 10 to 17 year olds, these young women are only just beginning to experience and live their life courses, yet the decisions they are making today will impact their future life course, often in significant ways. Unfortunately, life course or even future destiny is an arbitrary concept for many of these youth, as they are simply living and trying to survive in the present, and do not consider how the commission of a felony as a teenager can stay with them on their permanent record for the rest of their life. Thus, when they are 30 years old, and decide they would like to go and work with female teenage offenders who are going through now what they went through ten to fifteen years ago, they are told they are unable to work with these young ladies because their felony record prohibits them from working within the corrections field. Even still, they can find it difficult to even get a job at a grocery store or factory because of the mistakes made in childhood. Fortunately, the government has allowed for the sealing of juvenile records and this issue can be nullified for many teenagers, but the point is no matter whether their record is sealed or not, the mistakes of their past can come back to haunt them in the future.

In summary, the ecological perspective provided a solid theoretical framework for this study with female juvenile offenders, as the ecological perspective takes into consideration the multitude of factors influencing a female teenager to turn to crime. Whether the females in this study found their strongest influences in their family,

friends, community, or gang, the ecological perspective was able to include all of these factors and integrate the impact of each factor on the individual. Appendix C is a visual display of the ecological perspective and a conceptual map in relation to the lives and factors influencing female juvenile delinquents. Yet it is important to note on the map (Appendix C) that this study was only able to identify the factors and not the trajectories of the factors influencing females in Dallas County to engage in delinquent acts. This study has not been able to validate all of the possible trajectories for these risk factors nor has this study been able to identify the strengths of these paths into delinquency. Therefore, additional research projects in the future can utilize the findings from this study to further investigate the trajectories and strengths of each of these risk factors as they influence the lives of adolescent females in Dallas County and their potential paths into delinquency.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODS

As has been noted throughout the preceding chapters in this study, limited attention from the academic and research community has been devoted to female juvenile offenders. Consequently, at the time of data collection, there was a shortage of standardized needs and risk assessment instruments available that covered the variety of issues facing these young women. Further, one of the goals of this study was to conduct in-depth and narrative explorations of the life experiences of female juvenile offenders, predominantly, a young lady's experiences of personal struggles, family situations, and environmental conditions. Therefore, in order to achieve the depth and breadth of information sought, a study utilizing qualitative methods was selected. The following section will provide a rationale and explanation of the specific methods employed in this study as well as limitations of the study.

#### 4.1 Rationale for Qualitative Design

Current empirical literature focusing on the experiences of female juvenile offenders identifies common threads in the personal, social, and environmental factors that influence their choices to become involved in crime. The current empirical studies tend to recommend that future research include the use of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to provide researchers with more in depth information but also to give

a voice to the experiences of these young women. In a 1997 study conducted by Joanne Belknap & Kristi Holsinger, the authors recommended that the Ohio juvenile justice system collect additional qualitative and quantitative data that would allow the Ohio department to better understand who was entering their system and for what types of offenses. It is assumed that a similar recommendation would be made for all state and local juvenile departments. Another empirical study on female offenders recommends gathering knowledge directly from female juvenile offenders regarding the situations that lead to their involvement in the system as well as their ideas about program resources that could be beneficial to meeting the needs of these young women. The author notes, “they [delinquent young women] would like to tell researchers what their issues are and what they need” (Shulmire, 1996, p. 13).

According to Creswell (1998), “qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions that explore a social or human problem” (p. 15). Creswell (1998) goes on to explain that in qualitative research, “the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). In this study, the social or human problem being explored was female juvenile delinquency and one of the project goals was to provide a composite view of the lives of female juvenile offenders in Dallas County in their own words. In addition, the study aimed to use interviews with female adolescent offenders housed in a correctional setting in order to obtain a glimpse into their lives and factors influencing their referral to the juvenile justice system. Finally, by utilizing the ecological systems perspective as the theoretical

framework, the research design beseeched the employment of a methodology that included a holistic view of the subject within their environment.

Therefore, a qualitative design was employed based on the findings and recommendations from past empirical research as well as in order to provide Dallas County female adolescent offenders a chance to explain and provide a holistic picture of the factors influencing their decision-making and subsequent referral to the juvenile justice system.

#### 4.2 Instrument

Based on an extensive review of empirical literature on female juvenile offenders from 1992 to present, a semi-structured interview schedule was developed to include questions regarding the themes and areas of influence on the lives of these young women. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed so that the same questions from each topic area would be asked of each respondent, and so that “the interviewer is free to probe, rephrase questions, or take the questions in whatever order best fits that particular interview” (Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong, 2002, p. 176).

In order to obtain the responses to the interview questions, a face-to-face interview session with each respondent was conducted. The interview method was selected for this study because it “offered the investigator a degree of flexibility that is not available with questionnaires” (Monette et al., 2002, p. 176); flexibility in question order, diction, and reflection was deemed a pivotal issue due to the personal nature of the subject matter. The variety of risk factors covered in the empirical literature and included in this interview addressed issues of a personal nature and at times were

difficult for some respondents to answer. Therefore, by utilizing a face-to-face interview where the interviewer could establish rapport with the respondent, the objective was to enable the respondent to feel more comfortable to answer face-to-face probes rather than just entering a yes/no response on a standardized survey. However, since the respondent might not have felt as comfortable answering questions of a personal nature in a face-to-face interview with a stranger, the questionnaire began with questions intended to establish early rapport and help “break the ice” between the respondent and interviewer.

Other advantages of employing a face-to-face interview with female juvenile offenders were the ability of the interviewer to explain the questions that the respondent might not have otherwise understood and the addition of observational information to the responses of the respondent (Monette et. al, 2002, p. 185). Other disadvantages of face-to-face interviews include respondent misrepresentation, whereby they answer questions in a way to make themselves look more favorable to the interviewer and interview variation whereby the interviewer’s wording may vary from one interview to another. In order, to control for these disadvantages of the face-to-face interview process, in the introduction to the interview the young ladies were assured that their responses would not help or hurt their current situation and there was only one interviewer.

Another matter that needed to be addressed was the reflexivity between myself as the researcher, and the phenomena of female juvenile delinquency in Dallas County. Here, the term reflexivity refers to the research relationship that was established

between the interviewer and the respondent. For the past six years, I had worked for a private company that contracted with Dallas County Juvenile Department to provide residential treatment services to female offenders in Dallas County and each of the clients served at this residential treatment center had been previously processed through the interview site. Thus, there could have come a time during the interview process where I, the interviewer, had prior contact with the respondent for this study and the issue of confidentiality could arise. In order to be able to include these young ladies in this study, I assured the respondents with whom I had prior contact, that only information recorded in the interview would be included in the study data.

Finally, according to Lincoln & Guba (1985) certain steps should be taken in the design of qualitative research in order to ensure validity, they are: determine the focus for the inquiry; determine fit of paradigm to focus; determine where and from whom data will be collected; determine phases of the inquiry; determine instrumentation; plan data collection and recording; determine data analysis procedures; plan the logistics; and plan for trustworthiness. The validity of this study will be discussed in the following sections regarding the participants, sampling methods, trustworthiness, data collection procedures, and methods of data analysis.

#### 4.3 Participants

The goal of the study was to interview 25 to 30 English-speaking females, between 10 and 17 years old, residing in the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center, who were currently facing at least one petition of delinquency or violation of their probation as defined by the Juvenile Code of the Texas Family Code. Because the



respondents were minors, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of Texas at Arlington's Institutional Review Board as well as the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department.

The parameters for participation were based on a number of factors that deserve mentioning here. First, the youth were to be English-speaking due to my inability to proficiently speak and understand any language other than English. The youth were to be between 10 and 17 because these are the age boundaries in the State of Texas that must be met in order for a youth to be considered a juvenile. Finally, Dallas County youth were selected due to Dallas County being my county of residence at the time of the interviews.

The Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department is responsible for supervising status offenders and juvenile delinquents; Texas's juvenile probation system's executive branch is the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, and its policies and procedures are administered at the local level by the County Chief Juvenile Probation Officer with oversight from the County Juvenile Board. The juveniles housed at the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center represent youth from a variety of races and socioeconomic backgrounds. The detained youth also differ in their level of delinquent activities and history, for example, some youth interviewed were first time status offenders or juvenile delinquents, while others had already been adjudicated delinquent and had been serving time in the community on probation and were currently detained for probation violations, while others could have been in the detention center awaiting transfer to the adult court system. Therefore, demographically the youth included in this study had the

potential to vary in their age, race, socioeconomic background, and offense history; however, there was also a potential for there to be limited variation in the demographics of these youth depending on the available sample at the time of data collection.

#### 4.4 Sampling Methods

Optimally, this study was to include 25 to 30 participants detained during the month of December 2004. December 2004 was selected as the month of data collection to allow time for the study to be approved through my dissertation committee, the University of Texas at Arlington's Institutional Review Board, and the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department. Unfortunately, things did not work out as originally planned; the delays incurred will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

In order to obtain the data, site visits were made to the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center throughout the months of April and May 2005 during times which were previously agreed upon by the Dallas County Juvenile Department as being convenient for the center and the youth, so as to reduce the disruption to the normal routine of the center. Each day, upon arrival to the detention center, I was given an alphabetical list of young women being housed in the facility on that day by dormitory. On Saturdays I selected young women housed on the east side of the facility and on Sundays young women on the west side of the facility were selected. Note, according to detention staff, there was no difference between the young women based on their dorm placement other than the young women who were housed in the Special Needs Unit (SNU); the young women housed in the SNU were in that particular unit due to a behavior referral and they were receiving increased supervision. Due to safety and

security reasons, I did not interview any young women who were currently being housed in the SNU; however, that does not mean that those youth interviewed had not previously been referred to or stayed in the SNU.

Once I received the list of female residents, every 4<sup>th</sup> name on the list was marked for an interview starting with the first name listed; if I had previously interviewed the young lady then I went to the next marked name. The supervisor on duty was then informed of the marked name and either the supervisor or a member of the detention staff would then bring the respondent to me. When the staff went to get the respondent from her dorm, she was advised that she was being brought to the intake area to speak to someone. Once the youth came to the intake area, she was brought into the interview room where I introduced myself to the interviewee and reviewed the Minor Assent Form (Appendix D).

The respondent was informed that this was a voluntary study regarding the characteristics of female juveniles who were detained at the juvenile detention center and that the interview would last for approximately an hour to two hours. The respondents were also informed that the interview would be tape-recorded and later transcribed, that the participant was allowed to withdraw from the session at any time, and that she did not have to answer a question if she did not desire to respond. The confidentiality policy was then reviewed with the respondent. The first part of the confidentiality policy informed the youth that once the interview session had been transcribed, I would destroy the audiotape, the notes would be locked in a filing cabinet for the duration of the study and within a year of the study's completion all of the

identifying information would be destroyed. The second part of the confidentiality policy related to what information and situations would lead to me to not be able to keep the confidentiality of the respondent, including: if the respondent was considered to be a danger to herself or someone else; if the respondent was at risk of harm; and if the respondent knew of a child or children at risk to harm. The respondents were informed that in these situations, I was required by law to report these matters to the appropriate authorities.

Finally, the participants were asked if they had any questions. If their response was no, then they were again asked if they were willing to participate in the interview. If their response was yes, then any additional questions were answered or clarified and the participant was again asked if she was willing to participate in the interview. At any time if the respondent indicated that she did not desire to participate in the interview, the respondent was thanked for her time and the appropriate Juvenile Detention Center staff were notified and the youth was returned to her housing unit. (Note: two youth out of twenty-eight declined to participate in the study). If the respondent indicated that she desired to participate in the interview, then the respondent was given an assent form to read and sign (Appendix D). The assent form contained two statements that the youth was asked to read, agree to, and then sign indicating her agreement. The first statement indicated that the youth was agreeing to participate as a subject in the study and that she would be given a copy of the consent form she had signed. The second statement indicated that the youth understood that the interview was to be audio recorded. At this point if the youth indicated she did not want the interview recorded, then the youth did

not sign this assent and the tape recorder was not used. Throughout the interview process, no youth requested that the interview not be audio recorded.

Of note here is that this research project did not require parental consent due to the child being in the Juvenile Detention Center at the time of the interview. According to Texas law, when a child is housed at the Juvenile Detention Center, she is considered to be under the care and custody of the Juvenile Department, and hence the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer of the county serves as the youth's legal guardian. By receiving permission from the Dallas County Juvenile Board to conduct the interviews, I had received consent from each youth's legal guardian.

#### 4.5 Confidentiality & Protection of Respondents

This research project posed a number of issues concerning respondent confidentiality and protection due to the interviewees being minors and currently facing petitions of delinquency from the juvenile justice system. Therefore, several steps were taken in order to protect the respondents. First, prior to this research project being initiated, approval was obtained from the dissertation committee, the University of Texas at Arlington's Institutional Review Board, and the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department. These professionals, who have prior expertise involving the interviewing of human subjects, provided feedback and made suggestions regarding revisions that were followed prior to the first interview being initiated.

Once the research project was approved and the interview process initiated, additional steps were also taken to ensure respondent confidentiality and protection. Prior to the beginning of the interview, the respondent was informed of the following

things: that the purpose of the interview was to assess their experiences that led up to their detainment; that their participation was voluntary; that the interview would be audio taped and later transcribed; that the participant was allowed to withdraw from the session at any time; that she did not have to answer a question if she did not desire to respond; and that a Child Advocate was available for them during the interview if the youth so desired. The respondents were also informed that their responses would not help or hurt their current situation and that their confidentiality was protected within the above listed parameters.

Next, the confidentiality policy was reviewed with the respondent; the policy was that the interviewer would utilize a code system, whereby the interviewer will write down the respondent's assigned code on the demographic data sheet, written notes, and on the tape used to record the session. Once the session had been transcribed, the tape was destroyed, the notes were kept locked in a filing cabinet and within a year of the study's completion all of the identifying information was to be destroyed.

Additionally, in order to re-assure the respondents that the research project was intended to help increase the current understanding of the plight of female juvenile offenders, each respondent was offered a copy of the results if they wish. (Note: no youth expressed the desire to see the results, only that the results be used to help other females in the juvenile justice system). And finally, at the end of the interview, each respondent was given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss their reactions to the interview process as well as whether or not they wished to speak to anyone further about the responses they had provided. If during this debriefing process the respondent

requested or needed to meet with a counselor, then the interviewer would alert the staff of the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center who would then typically refer the child to a member of the Dallas County Juvenile Department Psychology staff. Throughout the interview process, no youth requested or appeared to be in need of a referral to the Psychology Department.

#### 4.6 Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), trustworthiness is of central importance to the validity of a qualitative study; according to these authors, trustworthiness is similar to internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity found in quantitative investigations. However, in naturalistic inquiry the researcher must ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Within naturalistic inquiry research, credibility is similar to internal validity and refers to the degree to which the one can believe that the report findings are reported honestly. Transferability is similar to external validity and refers to the applicability of information from one study to another study. Dependability is parallel to reliability and refers to the extent to which the study's findings can be replicated; and confirmability is similar to objectivity and refers to the extent to which the inquiry and findings are value free (Lincoln et al., 1985).

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the following steps were taken to ensure the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. First, in order to establish credibility, previous empirical research was used as a reference for the study's theoretical framework and development of the questionnaire. Additionally, I routinely met with my dissertation chair for supervision during the

course of the study. The study's dependability was established through a process similar to credibility in that previous empirical literature was consulted throughout the course of this study.

Due to this study being qualitative in nature with a small sample size, the transferability is limited to female adolescents living in Dallas County. The transferability will be addressed later in the study in the implications section. Finally, to ensure conformity, I met with my dissertation chair on a regular basis to review the instrument, data collected, recorded, and analyzed. Throughout this process, feedback was solicited and necessary adjustments were made.

#### 4.7 Required Approvals

In order to conduct the study, I first spoke with the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center's Superintendent Doug Vance to discuss the goals and purpose of this study, the rationale for interviewing the respondents, the rationale for the questions included on the questionnaire, and the steps necessary to gain access to the respondents. Mr. Vance then indicated, that once the dissertation committee had approved the study, he would aid in forwarding the study's proposal to the Dallas County Chief Juvenile Probation Officer Michael Griffiths. Once the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer approved the study then the study was presented to the Dallas County Juvenile Board for final approval; the board approved the study on December 13, 2004.

On December 13, 2004 the protocol for this dissertation project was initially submitted to the University of Texas at Arlington's Institutional Review Board (IRB). On April 19, 2005 the IRB provided final approval for the interview portion of this



study to begin, with the following stipulations: (1) I only ask questions written on the interview form or use probes to explore questions in greater detail; and (2) in the written portion of the dissertation, in order to prevent identification of the participants, direct quotations were prohibited.

#### 4.8 Data Collection Procedures

The interview began with a brief, demographic questionnaire that gathered information on the respondent's age, race, reason for detainment, and date of admission to the detention center (Appendix E). Once the demographic information was gathered, the interview process began with the "ice-breaker" questions in order to establish rapport with the respondent. Next, the interview questionnaire (Appendix F), which included themes from the current empirical literature regarding risk factors associated with female adolescent involvement in the juvenile justice system, was administered.

Finally, at the end of the interview, each respondent was given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss their reactions to the interview process as well as whether or not they wished to speak to anyone further about the responses they had provided. If during this debriefing process the respondent requested or needed to meet with a counselor, then the interviewer would alert the staff of the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center who would then refer the child to a member of the Dallas County Juvenile Department Psychology staff. Throughout the interview process, no youth requested or appeared to be in need of a referral to the Psychology Department.

The interview schedule was developed based on a review of empirical literature regarding risk factors associated with female juvenile delinquency. The literature

review included standardized assessment instruments and open-ended questionnaires used to elicit information from this group of adolescents. Once the interview schedule was developed, the actual questionnaire was given to employees in the residential treatment center for female juvenile offenders in Dallas County. The instrument was also reviewed by the members of my dissertation committee made up of academic professors from the University of Texas at Arlington's School of Social Work and Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice. Based on the recommendations of these professionals, the interview schedule was revised and clarified. The finalized interview schedule was the instrument used in the interview of the female respondents housed at the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center.

#### 4.9 Data Analysis

For this type of qualitative study, the analysis of data needed to take into account the myriad of factors influencing each of the female participants and at the same time the analysis needed to utilize an aggregate approach in order to meet the University of Texas at Arlington's Institutional Review Board requirements. Therefore, the phenomenological approach was selected. John Creswell has described phenomenology as a study that "describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon" (p. 50). The phenomenological approach to data collection and analysis was taken in this project because phenomenology involves viewing human behavior as a product of how people interpret their world and it is the researchers responsibility to capture this process of interpretation (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

Thus, by using the phenomenological approach as the basis for data analysis, the process of data scrutiny involved the search and organization of statements regarding the ways respondents were experiencing factors and events in their daily lives. According to Frykman & Gilje (2003), “by going to the experiencer, by making experience the starting point it becomes possible to see how, in the moment of interpretation, people do not just lend their inspiration to the surroundings but rather bring them to life and let them happen” (p. 15). According to Edmund Husserl, focusing on experience is about ‘being there’ and it is implied that phenomenology is occupied with describing things as they appear to the consciousness (Frykman & Gilje, 2003). Moran (2000) stated, “In other words, the way problems, things, and events are approached must involve taking their manner of appearance to consciousness into consideration” (as cited in Frykman & Gilje, 2003, p. 14). Finally, according to Karlsson (1993) the research process and analysis includes the researcher’s empathetic and interpretive understandings of the subject’s experience and statements regarding the phenomenon.

In summary, the phenomenological approach has allowed the participants in this study the opportunity to have their collective voices and experiences to be heard. By hearing from the young women themselves, the research, while presented in the aggregate form, has provided a greater understanding of the factors that influence their lives and referrals to the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department.

#### 4.10 Methods of Data Analysis

Because the interview was the only source of data from the participants, the audiotapes and field notes were the only resources used to document the respondents' answers. In order to retrieve comprehensive data from the audiotapes and notes, all data were transcribed into type written text. The next step of analysis was based on the phenomenological approach to data analysis in qualitative research; Creswell's (1998) book on *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* guided this analysis process. First, I read through all of the text and made notes in the margin and I jotted down notes on a separate tablet based on previously identified risk factor categories. The next step involved looking for meaning statements made by the interviewees that could be grouped into categories of data, i.e. positive/helpful educational experiences and hurtful/harmful educational experiences. Based on the meaning categories, I searched for descriptions of how these experiences related to their decision-making, and ultimately their choices to become involved in delinquent activities. Finally, as will be seen in Chapters 5 and 6, I attempted to describe the "essence" of these young women's experiences of the risk factors that appeared to have the greatest influence on their referral to the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department.

One final area of data analysis was the demographics for each respondent; this was documented through a demographic data sheet. The demographic data sheet (Appendix E) was completed at the beginning of each interview in order to record information on the date and time of the interview, as well as the respondent's age, race, reason for detainment, and date of admission to the detention center. Once all

interviews were completed, these records were compiled into a table, as will be seen in Chapter 5, and the information was broken down by category in order to provide general information about the demographics of the sample.

#### 4.11 Triangulation of Data

The dissertation committee chosen to supervise this research project strongly recommended the use of data triangulation in order to provide an alternative to validation and to provide greater understanding of the findings. According to Rubin & Babbie (2001), triangulation in qualitative inquires “occurs when researchers seek corroboration between two or more sources for their data and interpretations” (p. 432). In order to triangulate the data collected from females housed at the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC), Dallas County Juvenile Probation Officers (PO) were interviewed and asked to provide feedback on the same questions asked of the female participants (see Appendix G). The PO interviews were to take place in a group format of three to four officers at a time at three different PO districts throughout Dallas County.

The following steps were taken in order to be able to interview the probation officers: first a letter was written to Mr. Michael Griffiths, the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer for Dallas County requesting permission to conduct the PO interviews, next Mr. Griffiths wrote a letter to the University of Texas at Arlington’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) indicating that he was granting permission for the interviews to be conducted. The appropriate IRB paperwork was submitted to the IRB in October 2005 and final approval was given to conduct the interviews in December 2005. The only

restriction that the IRB placed on the probation officer interviews was that I was only allowed to solicit information from the POs, and that no information from the interviews, even in the aggregate form, could be shared with the POs. The IRB's rationale for this restriction was to ensure the confidentiality of the data collected during the interview process.

The probation officer interviews were conducted over a three week period in December 2005 and January 2006. The PO districts selected for inclusion in the study included one office that serves residents in North Dallas, Carrollton, Farmers Branch, and Richardson, (primarily Caucasian & Hispanic clients); one office that serves Garland, (primarily Hispanic & African American clients); and one office that serves the Oak Cliff area, (primarily Hispanic & African American clients). The data collected from the probation officers will be included throughout the findings chapter.

#### 4.12 Limitations of Current Study

In every empirical study, there will be certain limitations based on the study's design, instrument, sampling methods, data collection procedures, or other factors. Thus, at this point it is important to identify some of this study's limitations. First, because this sample consists of female juveniles in a correctional setting, the results do not include information on those offenders who have not been caught or have not been taken seriously by law enforcement officials. Additionally, since no control group was utilized, it is possible that other girls in the community are experiencing some of the same risk factors for delinquency but have either found different ways to cope with

these risk factors, have not yet engaged in delinquent activities, or have not yet gotten caught for their delinquent acts.

Another limitation is due to the use of the face-to-face interview method; as some respondents may not have felt as comfortable answering questions of a personal nature in a face-to-face interview with a stranger, thus some of the respondents may have answered the questions with partial truths, or in an effort to make themselves look socially desirable. One other limitation based on the relationship with the respondent relates to the confidentiality clause that was explained to all respondents prior to the initiation of the interview. The sentence regarding when I am required to violate their confidentiality and report certain matters to the appropriate authorities may lead some young women to either minimize or deny prior or current abuse or thoughts of wanting to hurt themselves or others. In both of the above listed limitations, I attempted to address these limitations by establishing rapport throughout the interview process and asking questions of a more personal nature later in the interview so as to allow time for some rapport to develop.

This study's use of an audio tape recorder during the interview process also created a potential limitation; there was a potential that this device might have initially created feelings of discomfort for these young women. Thus, as I will explain in the next chapter, I worked to minimize the discomfort created by placing the tape recorder to the side of the table, rather than in between the respondent and myself, to reduce its visibility and potential for discomfort.

One final limitation that I consider to be the most significant relates to the limitations placed on the study by the University of Texas at Arlington's Institutional Review Board. A true qualitative study was unable to be conducted because of their restrictions allowing me to only ask questions that were written on the semi-structured interview schedule and to use simple probes to gain additional information. Had I been allowed to ask additional questions, then it is possible that the data collected could provide an even greater understanding of the phenomena of female juvenile delinquency. For example, as will be reported in the results chapter, a few youth alluded to being sexually abused, but the youth did not specifically indicate that any abuse had occurred. If the IRB had allowed for additional questions to be asked as needed, then rather than simply asking "could you tell me more about that [not allowing a man to put his hands on her]," I could have specifically inquired "why is this such an important issue to you?" or "what has lead you to having such strong feelings regarding men putting their hands on you?"

In summary, while there are limitations to all research projects, it is my intent to provide the most in-depth review of data collected and make recommendations based on the data that can help improve the plight of female juvenile delinquents.



## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the risk factors influencing juvenile delinquency for females in Dallas County, Texas. It was accomplished through semi-structured open-ended interviews. The interview instrument was developed based on an extensive review of empirical literature on female juvenile offenders to include questions regarding themes and areas of influence on the lives of young women. This section contains the analysis of data collected from the interviews as it relates to the purpose of this research project.

#### 5.1 Data Collection

The choice of venue for the interviews was left to the discretion of the Dallas County Juvenile Department Detention Supervisor. All of the subjects were interviewed individually, with only the researcher present. All of the interviews took place in a closed-door, private room within the intake area of the detention center on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. The interview room was square, with only a table and two chairs inside; there were three solid brick walls, one wall that included the door and a large window, and the door also included a large window. Through the large wall window and door window, the researcher was within clear visibility of at least one

detention staff at all times, while only the back of the young lady could be seen by the detention staff.

Over the course of the interview process, twenty-eight young women were brought to the interview room for inclusion in the study. The Minor Assent Form was reviewed with all twenty-eight individuals and upon completion of the review, twenty-six of the twenty-eight individuals agreed to participate in the study. The two individuals who refused to participate in the study were thanked for their time and the detention staff was advised that the resident could be returned to her dormitory; the researcher did not inquire as to why the young women did not wish to be included in the research study. All of the twenty-six young women who agreed to participate in the study agreed to allow the researcher to record the interview with an audiotape. All of the audiotapes were destroyed by the researcher upon completion of the transcription of the interview session.

The interview questionnaire was semi-structured interview schedule, and utilized the Demographic Data Sheet (Appendix E) and Questionnaire (Appendix F), which contained questions pertaining to the general purpose of this research study. In an effort to obtain detailed responses, the researcher responded to the interviewee by utilizing active listening, empathetic reflection, and minimal encouragement. In an effort to assure the confidentiality of the subjects, the analysis and reporting of data from this study is in the aggregate form. Further, there is no use of direct participant quotations.

Finally, with regards to reflexivity between the researcher and respondent, out of the twenty-six young women selected to participate in the research study, I had had prior contact with two of the residents. Therefore, at the start of the interview process, the respondent was assured that all information gathered for the purpose of this research project was going to be taken strictly and directly from the interview, and that the respondent was to provide answers to the questions as if the interviewer had no prior contact with the respondent. Both residents agreed to participate in the study.

In sum, the data collection process went according to plan. The interviews took an average of forty minutes to complete, depending on the degree of detail provided, and at the end of each interview, the respondent was thanked for her participation and a member of the detention staff returned the youth to her dormitory.

## 5.2 Participants

The sample for this research study included twenty-six female adolescents who were housed at the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) between April 30 and May 29, 2005. Each respondent was between twelve and seventeen years old and currently facing at least one petition of delinquency or violation of her probation. The average age of the respondents was 15.23 years ( $SD = 1.31$ ) and thirteen of the young women had allegedly violated the terms and conditions of her probation. The remaining respondents were alleged to have committed crimes ranging from status offenses such as running away from home to truancy as well as offenses up to and including assault and terroristic threat. The average length of stay for the interviewees was 30.62 days, while the range in stay was from one day up to seventy-one days ( $SD = 22.33$ ).

With regards to the racial background of each respondent, there was some discrepancy between the race reported by the youth and their racial category as reported by the juvenile department. Therefore, according to youth report, out of the twenty-six youth interviewed, five were of Caucasian decent, seven were of African American decent, nine of Hispanic decent, one of Cambodian decent, and four young women reported a mixed racial background that included: Caucasian, African American, American Indian, Indian, Hispanic, and German. Yet, according to the categorization reported by the juvenile department, the racial back ground of those youth interviewed included: five of Caucasian decent (19% of population), ten of African American decent (38%), ten of Hispanic decent (38%), and one of Asian decent (4%). The most recent demographic data available summarizes referral information for youth in 2002; the data reveal that 37.6% of all youth referred to Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department were of African American decent, 39.0% were Hispanic, 22.2% were Anglo, and 1.2% were classified as other (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, 2005). Thus the sample gathered for this study closely resembles the typical Dallas County referrals.

One final demographic statistic that is important to note prior to the review of these qualitative findings includes the youth's report regarding the incidence of this stay in JDC. Out of the twenty-six young women interviewed, seven reported this as being their first episode in JDC, six reported that this was not their first time in the center but did not quantify their stay, and the remaining thirteen reported this as being either their second, third, fourth, or fifth time. Out of the thirteen young women who quantified their stay, one reported this as her second, seven reported this as their third, three

reported this as their fourth, and two reported this as their fifth stay. In sum, 73% of the young women had previously been referred to JDC and on average, this was their 2.6 stay (SD=1.39).

The following table represents the demographic data collected during the interview process.

Table 5.1 Demographic Data

Age	Race per Respondent Report	Race per Probation Department	Episode in JDC	Days in JDC
15	Caucasian	Caucasian	3 <sup>rd</sup>	25
16	Hispanic	Hispanic	1 <sup>st</sup>	17
16	Mixed	African American	1 <sup>st</sup>	34
13	African American	African American	2 <sup>nd</sup>	17
17	African American	African American	Not reported	21
14	Hispanic	Hispanic	Not reported	21
15	Asian	Asian	1 <sup>st</sup>	12
13	Hispanic	Hispanic	1 <sup>st</sup>	6
14	African American	African American	Not reported	1
16	Caucasian	Caucasian	3 <sup>rd</sup>	11
15	Hispanic	Hispanic	4 <sup>th</sup>	1
16	Hispanic	Hispanic	4 <sup>th</sup>	30
16	Mixed	African American	1 <sup>st</sup>	53
16	Mixed	African American	Not reported	61
15	African American	African American	5 <sup>th</sup>	34
16	Mixed	African American	3 <sup>rd</sup>	45
17	African American	African American	3 <sup>rd</sup>	62
16	Hispanic	Hispanic	1 <sup>st</sup>	58
14	Hispanic	Hispanic	3 <sup>rd</sup>	20
16	Hispanic	Hispanic	4 <sup>th</sup>	59
15	Caucasian	Caucasian	5 <sup>th</sup>	30
16	African American	African American	Not reported	2
14	Hispanic	Hispanic	Not reported	1
16	Caucasian	Caucasian	1 <sup>st</sup>	41
12	African American	African American	3 <sup>rd</sup>	63
17	Caucasian	Caucasian	3 <sup>rd</sup>	71

(Note: the information gathered regarding the youth's offense was obtained directly from the youth). With regards to the offenses allegedly committed by the young women, twenty-one of the reported offenses that resulted in their referral to JDC were of a non-serious nature and five were of a serious nature, including assault, terroristic threat, and possession of a large amount of a controlled substance. Of the young women reportedly committing non-serious offenses, the range of offenses included running away, truancy, and not following the terms and conditions of their probation as ordered by the probation department. As was discussed in the literature review section of this study, many of these young women began their deviant episodes by running away from their homes, foster care placements, or even residential treatment centers where they had been originally sent by the probation department for rehabilitation services; of the twenty-six young women interviewed, eight were currently in JDC for running away.

Thirteen of the young women interviewed were being housed at JDC for violations of their probation, and out of those thirteen women, only one young lady had been referred back to JDC for a serious offense. Of the remaining twelve accused of violating their probation, one indicated her new referral was for a non-serious offense, three indicated that their referral was due to issues related to school, three had allegedly run away from their homes, and five had not completed their placements successfully, either because of running away or being discharged unsuccessfully from the treatment program.

One final issue regarding offenses relates to the incidents of delinquent activities that occur once a young woman has initiated a deviant episode by running

away from home or residential placement. Out of the twenty-six youth interviewed, only six young women specifically discussed activities that they engaged in while on the run and out of those six young women, they reported being gone from home or placement for several days up to several months. During their time away from their guardians, they reportedly engaged in delinquent activities ranging from using drugs and alcohol to selling drugs, stealing cars, and prostitution. Half of the respondents reported that this runaway was the start of their delinquent activities while the other half reported that they had runaway due to having committed other delinquent acts and the fear of being caught or detained for these offenses. Finally, a few of the respondents discussed their gratitude and thoughts of good fortune in that their referral to JDC generally constituted only one or two of the crimes that they were responsible for, yet they had committed a multitude of delinquent acts prior to being detained and they were not being held responsible for these offenses.

The information on the participants in this study constitutes the data gathered from the Demographic Data Sheet (Appendix E) and is intended to provide a systematic random sampling of the types of female offenders referred to the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department during the first half of the year 2005. The remaining sections of the results chapter will discuss the research findings in a format similar to the literature review discussed in Chapter 2 of this document; previous research and revelations from the present interviews has indicated that the following broad categories of life factors have had the greatest impact on these young women being referred to the probation department at this time. The information will be presented in the following

categories (a) personal dynamics, (b) family dynamics, and (c) environmental dynamics.

### 5.3 Personal Dynamics

As with the empirical findings, the personal dynamics of the females interviewed will be discussed within the following categories: biological influences, psychological factors, and environmental stressors. The first of these, biological influences will include drugs as well as pregnancy and motherhood.

#### *5.3.1 Drugs*

While only one youth was being held in JDC for an offense related to drugs and only four youth reported violating their probation due to using drugs, twenty-two out of the twenty-six youth interviewed reported using drugs and/or alcohol during their lifetimes.

##### 5.3.1.1 Abstinence

Of the four youth who reported that they had never used drugs or alcohol, one was twelve, one was thirteen, and two were fifteen. All four of the youth reported that they did not intend to ever use drugs or alcohol because of the stories they had heard from other females in JDC and stories from people in the community. The resounding feelings of these young women were that drugs and alcohol were bad for your body and health. Finally, these four young women reported that they generally engaged in pro-social activities with their friends and not one respondent indicated that her friends or any family members had used drugs.



### 5.3.1.2 Usage

For the twenty-six youth interviewed, the following chart indicates the number of drugs reportedly used by each respondent.

Table 5.2 Self-Report Drug Use

Number of drugs used	Number of youth who reported use	Percentage of population
None	4	15
One	2	8
Two	6	23
Three	4	15
Four or more	11	42

As indicated by these numbers, 85% of the respondents indicated that they had used drugs or alcohol in the past, and close to half of the young women reported using four or more illicit substances in their past.

For the twenty-two young women who reported prior use of drugs and alcohol, the following chart indicates the drugs used and the number of youth who reported using each:

Table 5.3 Self-Report Types of Drug Use

Drug used	Number of youth who reported use	Percentage of population	Percentage of youth reporting use
Marijuana	22	85	100
Alcohol	16	62	73
Cocaine/crack	14	54	64
Prescription medications	9	35	41
Crystal Methamphetamines	8	31	36
Ecstasy	6	23	27
Embalming fluid	3	12	14
Toluene	2	8	9
Heroin	1	4	5
Hallucinogenic Mushrooms	1	4	5

For the youth reporting the use of prescription medications, those prescriptions included: Xanax, Valium, codeine, and Hydrocodone, with Xanax being the one most commonly used, with 6 of the 9 respondents reporting use.

According to the perceptions of the probation officers (PO) interviewed, these young women primarily use alcohol, marijuana, and prescription medications. The POs also reported that these young women tend to experiment with drugs and alcohol and will typically try different drugs when they are offered to them; one PO district indicated that while these youth may experiment with different drugs, these youth will typically not continue using a drug if they do not enjoy the effects. Another comment heard from two of the three districts was that these youth are living in communities and homes where the use of alcohol and marijuana are socially acceptable, and often the parents of these youth allow the use of alcohol in their homes. According to POs, parents often cited the rationale that the child was going to use regardless, so why not allow it in the home so they knew their children were safe. Other information provided by the POs included: there has been a rise in the use of methamphetamines in some districts; many youth are using their parent's prescription medications, and females tend to underestimate their use of drug and alcohol. The officers also observed that all youth who come into contact with them have tried drugs and alcohol at least once.

In addition to reporting the types of drugs used, some of the respondents discussed their attempts to change their use of drugs and alcohol. Two youth reported that they were attempting to curtail their usage. Two youth reported having been clean for two months. One respondent indicated that she had been clean for nine months. For

those youth who provided information about the frequency of their prior use, four of the youth specifically indicated daily use of drugs and/or alcohol, this question was not specifically asked therefore the youth who provided information on frequency of use did so on their own freewill.

Many of the young women also reported who they tended to use drugs and alcohol with; of the twenty-two respondents who indicated prior drug and/or alcohol use, sixteen reported using with friends, and two reported using with a sibling. Additionally, three youth reported that their parents allowed them to use drugs and/or alcohol at their homes and two of the three indicated that they had used drugs and/or alcohol with a parent or guardian. The two youth who reported using with a parent or guardian also indicated that they no longer had any contact with that parent. They indicated this was due to incarceration of the parent or due to the probation department having prohibited contact.

#### 5.3.1.3 Knowledge

Each of the interviewees were asked specifically about their knowledge of drugs and alcohol. Twenty-five of the twenty-six respondents indicated that drugs and alcohol were bad for a person's health, over and over again the word bad kept being repeated by the respondents. Three of the young women indicated that there could also be legal consequences for the use of drugs and alcohol, yet none of these respondents were the young women who indicated that their referral to JDC was related to drugs or alcohol. Finally, three youth spoke of their knowledge of drugs and alcohol in a

relatively positive manner, indicating that they could help you make money and feel better about yourself and your situation.

The overwhelming response from all three probation officer districts when asked about their perceptions regarding the youths' knowledge of drugs and alcohol was that these young women "know more than we do!" and that generally this knowledge is coming straight from the streets. In addition to having more information than the POs, most of these youth also know how each drug will make them feel, where to get each of the drugs they may want, they have seen the effects of many drugs and long term use on their family and friends, and these youth have little or no regard for the consequences of their use.

#### 5.3.1.4 Rationale for Usage

Another question that revealed drug and alcohol use related to the ways that the youth dealt with stress. Six of the respondents indicated that when they were faced with tough or stressful situations in the community, one of their coping methods was to use drugs or alcohol. While a few other respondents either stated specifically or indirectly indicated that they had used drugs in the past due to pressure from their peers to engage in similar activities. Note, the respondents were not directly asked about why they thought that they chose to use drugs or alcohol.

Based on information found in the literature review, prior research has indicated that when comparing male and female adolescent alcohol usage, family disturbances were significantly stronger predictors of girls' delinquency and alcohol problems. The family factors with strongest predictors of girls' alcohol problems included parental

stressful life events, low family intimacy, parenting impairments, and marital discord (Davies et al., 1997). Again, while no question was directly asked regarding why the respondents thought that they used drugs or alcohol, of the twenty-two youth reporting substance abuse, seventeen youth also reported problems in their home life and/or family relationships. These problems included presently not liking and not getting along with their guardians, previously having a poor relationship with their guardian, being the child of an alcoholic or drug user, being physically or emotionally abused by their guardian, not communicating with their guardian, and having more of a friendship with their parent rather than a mother/daughter or father/daughter type relationship.

The information provided by probation officers supported the information provided by the respondents, the POs indicated that these youth often turned to drugs and alcohol to cope with stress and as stated earlier, that often the parents are aware and allow these teenagers to use drugs and alcohol in the home or these youth have seen other family members use drugs and alcohol in the past.

### *5.3.2 Pregnancy and Motherhood*

Continuing from the biological perspective, the topic of teenage motherhood came up during a few interviews. Only two youth indicated that they were parents, one had a nine-month-old child and the other a four-year-old child. Both youth indicated that their parent/guardian was caring for their child during this period of detainment. Of the remaining twenty-four interviewees, no one else reported being a mother, having a miscarriage or an abortion.

Throughout the interview process, additional information came up regarding some of the sexual behaviors of these teenagers. For example, three youth reported engaging in prostitution; all of these youth engaged in these activities while on the run from their homes and indicated that their motivation was monetary gain. In addition, five youth indicated that they had engaged in consensual sexual activities with at least one partner in the community. Yet it is important to remember that there were not any questions specifically geared towards pregnancy, motherhood, or sexual behaviors, therefore the incidence of sexual behaviors could be much higher than reported.

In each of the interviews at the probation officer districts, the subjects of motherhood and sexual behaviors came up. Each district reported some incidents of teenage motherhood and each district reported that the young women being supervised were engaging in risky sexual behaviors. Regarding motherhood, some of the information provided included: these young mothers often use their child as an excuse for why they cannot comply with the terms and conditions of their probation. These mothers often regret becoming pregnant, but only a few take the steps to keep from getting pregnant again (i.e. the use of protection or contraceptives). Often the parents of the probationer will request that the youth be placed on a contraceptive by the probation department. With regards to sexual behaviors, the probation officers reported: most young women do not ask or use protection when engaging in sexual activities; two districts reported that their probationers will not share much information about their behaviors, while one district indicated that these young women share everything with their probation officer; and one district indicated that many of these young women

attempt to get pregnant so that they can have someone to love unconditionally and to be loved unconditionally.

#### 5.4 Mental Health

Going back to information from the empirical review, psychological characteristics of female juvenile delinquents tend to include symptoms of mental health problems (depression), problems with emotion management (anger and anxiety), as well as low levels of self-worth (self-esteem and suicidal ideation). Each of these factors came up during the interview process as well as information regarding how these young women tend to feel on typical days in the community and information regarding how they cope with tough or stressful situations in the community. All of this information helps to provide a more focused understanding of these young women's emotional status and abilities to cope with events and circumstances in their surroundings.

##### *5.4.1 View of Self*

In the interview, the very first question asked of respondents involved them providing a brief description of herself to someone that she did not know very well. In general, the majority (77%) of the young women described themselves in a positive manner, using words and phrases such as easy to get along with, nice, funny, friendly, caring, lovable, and outgoing. Yet six respondents (23%) described themselves in a generally downbeat manner, using words and phrases such as having mood swings, being depressed, having a lot of problems, and as a drug user.

#### *5.4.2 Mood*

During a later section of the interview, the young women were asked to describe how they generally felt on a typical day in the community. The majority of the respondents reported experiencing positive feelings such as being happy (58%), excited (12%) and feeling good/fine/comfortable (35%). The remainder of the young women used descriptive words for their feelings that included: moody (12%), angry (8%), sad (8%), tired (8%), high from using drugs or alcohol (8%), depressed (4%), lazy (4%), and bored (4%). Each young woman typically included several words to describe her feelings on a typical day, and each of her feeling words was included in this tabulation.

The probation officers, when asked the same question provided responses on almost the other end of the spectrum. For example, all three districts reported that these youth felt depressed and suffered from mood swings. Additional comments made in at least two districts were that these youth suffered from low self-esteem; they often felt like they did not fit in; or they felt sad and isolated. Other responses included the idea that these youth do not understand their feelings and that they are not likely to report problems with their emotions to their probation officers.

#### *5.4.3 Coping*

One final specific question regarding emotions involved the young women reporting their methods of coping with tough or stressful situations in the community. The methods for coping ranged widely, with the majority of the coping methods being considered negative or harmful in nature. For example, 39% opted to stay to themselves, 31% used drugs or alcohol when under stress, 27% reported fighting, 15%



chose to run away, 12% reported screaming and arguing, while 4% reported self mutilation, attempting to forget about the issue, and throwing things as being a chosen method for coping. Some of the positive coping methods included: talking to someone in general (35%), either talking to friends or crying (19%), talking to a parent/ guardian (15%), praying (12%), writing (8%), and thinking of the consequences (4%). (Note: each youth reported using at least one form of coping skill listed above, and some mentioned several coping methods; all coping methods were included in these numbers).

When the probation officers were asked this same question, their responses seemed to match well with those provided by the respondents. Some coping methods mentioned by the probation officers included: crying, running away, using drugs or alcohol, skipping school, shutting down/not talking, engaging in violent and/or deviant acts.

Throughout the interview, several youth reported additional information regarding their emotional well being that deserves mentioning here. For example, nine of the youth (35%) reported specific incidents of feeling depressed during their lifetimes and eleven (42%) acknowledged that they experienced difficulties managing their emotions, specifically anger. For those youth reportedly feeling depressed and/or angry, some attributed that depression to their history of poor decision-making, or their current incarceration. Others attributed those feelings to past experiences such as sexual abuse, parental divorce, and parental absences. Almost all of these same young women reported turning to alcohol and/or drugs as a coping method; only two of these

young women did not report ever using drugs or alcohol; incidentally, both of these young women either specifically stated or implied that they were victims of sexual abuse at an earlier age. Thus for those youth who admit to having problems with emotion management, often their initial reaction to stress is to get high or intoxicated.

Three of the interviewees (12%) acknowledged experiencing feelings of low self-esteem and self worth; three (12%) admitted to either current or past use of psychotropic medications and counseling services through a therapist, psychiatrist, or mental health treatment facility; and one young lady (4%) acknowledged that she had previously resorted to self-mutilation as a coping mechanism when facing a difficult or stressful situation, yet she also acknowledged that she had not engaged in this behavior for over one year. Finally, not one interviewee discussed experiencing suicidal ideations or attempts, and while this number could and should be considered encouraging, it is important to note that all youth were advised during the initial assent process that if they revealed any information regarding their desire to harm themselves, that this information would be reported to the appropriate authorities; therefore, this safety measure could have limited how candid the respondent could have been.

#### *5.4.4 Recidivism*

Additional data analysis regarding mental health involves comparing the profiles of first time referrals to the profiles of youth indicating recidivism by marking this stay in JDC as something other than their first occurrence. Of the seven youth reporting this as their first trip to JDC, all generally described themselves in a positive manner to someone they did not know and five (19% of population) reported positive

feelings on typical days in the community. One first time youth reported feelings of low self-esteem and one youth (4%) reported feelings of depression. Yet five (19% of population) of the seven first time referrals reported engaging in generally negative coping skills when faced with a tough or stressful situation and the one youth who had previously engaged in self-mutilating behaviors was a first time referral. Numerically, this means that of the eight youth who reported using drugs/alcohol as a coping skill, two of those youth were first time residents in JDC; two of the four youth who indicated running away from home were first time residents in JDC; and one of the seven youth who when under stress turned to fighting was a first time resident in JDC. In sum, these statistics regarding first time referrals to JDC indicate that while these youth may describe themselves in a positive manner and generally feel positive in the community; they typically lack good coping skills.

By taking the data discussed earlier in this section on mental health and subtracting the data on first time referrals, the data provide a better assessment of the mental health of the youth who are considered recidivists. For example, recidivists data now tells us that only 50% of the young women described themselves in a positive manner and 32% described themselves in a generally downbeat manner to someone she did not know very well. In addition, 47% of youth who had recidivated reported feelings of depression during their lifetimes and 65% reported experiencing problems with emotion management. Further, the two youth who alluded to or stated they had been sexually abused but did not use drugs or alcohol, were both recidivists with this being their 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> trip to JDC.

With regards to coping skills, recidivistic youth were almost equally split in their decision to use positive (53%) or negative/harmful (47%) coping mechanisms. All youth who reported taking psychotropic medications were recidivists and represented 18% of the recidivist's population; 35% reported using drugs or alcohol as a coping strategy, 35% chose to fight in stressful situations, and 12% of these youth opted to run away. In sum, youth who reported this trip to JDC as being something other than their first, generally reported experiencing greater difficulty managing their emotions and often chose poor coping strategies, yet these recidivistic women also often viewed themselves in a positive manner, were more likely than first time referrals to choose positive coping skills and were less likely to run away from their problems.

#### *5.4.5 Response to Being in the Juvenile Detention Center*

Another area of questioning related to the mental health pertains to how the youth felt about being in JDC as well as what the youth thought and felt on her first trip to JDC. Each youth was asked to describe her initial reactions to JDC and here, almost all youth had the same response: fear. Of the twenty-six youth interviewed, twenty-one (81%) were initially scared, nervous, anxious, or shocked to be there and thought that they might be subjected to mistreatment or abuse like they had seen on television or in the movies; the remaining 5 youth (19%) thought that JDC would be easy or that they would not be there to long, so there was not much to worry about.

When the probation officers were asked to describe their perceptions regarding a female teenager's reactions to her first trip to JDC, their responses again mirrored those of the respondents, but with a little more detail. All three districts indicated that

these youth are initially scared or overwhelmed but at the same time curious; at the start, these youth are shocked by all of the rules, but then they begin to either test their limits or find a clique to fit in with, often with youth from their area of town. Yet two of the three districts reported that youth who had been on the run from their homes often see JDC as a step up and typically are grateful to be in their situation. One other sentiment reported by the POs was that many youth think they will be out soon, so the significance of their first trip is often minimized. But two of the three districts did confirm that these youth often realize it is harder to be away from their homes and families than they initially thought, and that these youth may begin to make verbal commitments to change.

Each youth was also asked to describe JDC in general, not just their first trip, but what it was like to be locked up and away from home. This question provided more variation in responses. The majority of the responses were that JDC was hard or even terrible (46%), some said that being away from home was hard because they were unable to talk to their family members as often as they wanted (35%), while others explained that they had gotten used to being detained (23%) (All youth who said they had gotten used to being in JDC were repeat referrals). The remaining responses were generally said by only one or two respondents, but included descriptions such as: it is hard because we have to listen, go to school, we don't get to do what we want, we don't get to go outside, we don't have any freedom, it is boring, some felt sorry for themselves, and some admitted to just wanting to do their time and get out. Only a few

youth described JDC as being safe or as helping them to realize their mistakes and helping them to change.

When the probation officers were asked to describe their perceptions regarding the youth's views on JDC, their responses mirrored and varied from the responses provided by the interviewees. The probation officers felt that some youth felt it was cool to be in JDC and these youth may talk about it to show off to their friends; that these young women get comfortable after their first trip, they know the process, they find a clique to hang with, and begin to not care about being detained; and that many youth simply do not like all of the rules that they are required to follow.

## 5.5 Education

Attention will now turn to education, an area considered to be an environmental stressor impacting the personal dynamics of female juvenile offenders. The youth interviewed revealed a broad range of educational experiences, both positive and negative, and some young women shared more information than others regarding their educational histories. All shared stories of struggles and many shared stories of hope that all deserve mentioning here.

### *5.5.1 Views on School*

The first education question asked of these young women was to describe what school was like for them, and almost half (46%) of the youth initially used positive words such as fun (27%), good (8%), "like it a lot" (8%), and "love it" (4%). Over half (54%) used generally negative words to describe school, such as boring (23%), hard (15%), "don't like it" (12%), and horrible (4%). Yet to gain a better understanding of

why these young women used these words, it is important to take into account the qualitative factors that helped them to determine their word choice. When referring to the positive aspects of school, the sources of their satisfaction can be broken down into two categories, those related to the school environment and those related to school activities. For example, when referring to positive feelings about school, many youth enjoyed the social environment, such as the seven youth who stated they enjoyed school so much because they got to spend time with friends. Two enjoyed school because it helped pass time during the day. Two enjoyed eating lunch so they could see their friends. One enjoyed the parties and movies at school, while one admitted to enjoying the “craziness” experienced in her alternative school classroom.

For those who describe positive feelings related to school activities, six young women stated that they really enjoyed learning. Three enjoyed teachers that helped them with their work. Three enjoyed participating in extra-curricular activities. Three discussed specific courses which they enjoyed, such as science, math, history, English, elective courses, computer and typing (specifically because it taught job skills). One young lady simply stated that she loved everything about school. Therefore, there were many youth who described school and its’ various aspects as being a positive factor in their lives.

For those youth who used generally downbeat words to describe school, it was important to understand the rationale behind their word choice as well. The sources of their dissatisfaction can be broken down into two categories, those related to the school environment and those related to school activities. The factors impacting the school

environment that made their experiences negative include: four youth describing the peer pressure and influence of “bad people” in their school. A few youth discussed problems with other students such as fights, bullying, general conflict, and people talking negatively about them. Several reported of administrative staff and resource officers allegedly “picking on” the students because they are on probation. For those youth discussing problems related to the school activities, five indicated that the schoolwork and some subjects, such as math and reading, were too difficult for them. Two stated that teachers did not help them (note: teacher issues will be discussed further in the next section). Two youth discussed their pain when other students called them “dumb” because they could not read. One youth indicated that the schoolwork was just too easy for her. Finally, one youth complained that she did not like school because it required her to get up early while another youth did not like getting counseling at school for her allegedly delinquent behaviors, because the counseling was boring. Therefore, for as many youth who discussed the positive aspects of school, just as many talked about hardships they had experienced inside the walls of their schools.

When information from recidivistic youth is pulled from the education data, nine of the thirteen recidivists reported negative feelings and thoughts toward their educational experiences and four reported generally positive experiences. For the youth reporting generally negative reactions to school, the most common response was school was hard due to not being able to complete the work assigned or because of claims their teachers did not teach. Interestingly, each recidivist youth who reported enjoying school also reported being at least one year behind in school, one qualified her positive



response in terms of having fun when she attended (implying problems with truancy), and two of the four youth reported they had not attended school at least a year and a half or longer.

Probation officers, across the board described school as being a difficult environment for these young women. All three probation districts confirmed that many of these females simply choose not to attend school for several different reasons. They related that some youth would rather hang out with their friends at people's houses rather than at school, while other youth on probation often feel like outcasts. These youth who said they felt like outcasts often get suspended for some type of behavior and then lose the drive to return to school. Many youth do not make school a priority because their parent's placed little or no emphasis on getting an education.

#### *5.5.2 Teachers*

Another question asked of the young women regarding their school experiences related to what they thought the school and teachers might think about the youth's referral to the Juvenile Department. For this question, the majority of respondents (66%) indicated that their teachers would be surprised (35%), disappointed (23%), sad (4%), and would "not like it" (4%); thus the majority of respondents indicated that their teachers were concerned for the youth's well being. Additional responses by youth indicated they felt their teachers would not care (12%), the teachers thought the youth was trouble (8%), or would feel JDC was what the youth got for her choices (8%). The remaining two youth (8%) indicated their teachers probably did not know why the student was gone and would not have cared enough to find out the reason for her

absence. Of the youth who indicated an uncaring response from teachers, all but one youth was in JDC for a violation of her probation.

Not only did the youth share information about their perceptions regarding the school & teachers reactions, they also talked in general about the teachers in their school. This next section will cover comments regarding the enthusiastic and unenthusiastic feedback given regarding their teachers. The positive revelations included ten youth (38% of the population) who described liking the teachers who actually taught, explained, helped, and talked to the youth, either about their schoolwork or the things going on outside of school that might be interfering in their classroom work. The words used to describe these teachers included “cool, helpful, and nice.” Yet, thirteen youth (50% of the population) revealed unenthusiastic feedback about teachers including reports of teachers who do not teach, pay attention, or respond when students ask for help, those teachers who allegedly just gave out work and told the students to “do it” without any explanation, and two youth’s reports of teachers who either disrespected them in the classroom or picked on them because they were on probation. In summary, there is quite a bit of variation in the experiences these young women have in their school environment, not just because of their peers but also because of the adults that are working in the school system.

Each probation district also provided information regarding their perceptions about the teachers and the schools reactions to these youth being on probation. For this question, there was a wide variety of answers between each of the districts; one district reported problems with school officials labeling students once learning that the youth

was on probation and schools where the officials hoped to find alternative placements for these youth, rather than in their own schools. A second district had similar school responses, including incidents where these young women were kicked out of school; incidents where their teachers reported having no time to help with class work or problems; social promotions; a lack of positive reinforcements; and identified the need for life counselors especially for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade “hump.” Yet another district stated that the school faculty did not discriminate against their youth and often worked to help encourage and support these youth. Therefore, the school personnel information provided by the probation officers tended to vary according to district and could help explain some of the variation reported by the respondents.

### *5.5.3 Additional Information*

Outside of the specific questions regarding education, several of the young women expressed positive thoughts and information regarding their academic lives and future that deserve mentioning here. Particularly, seven youth (27% of the population) indicated a sincere wish and desire to go to college, to earn their associate or bachelor degree. Two youth indicated that they were most successful at schools where the work was self-paced and there were teachers available to help when needed. Three others indicated that if they felt a teacher cared about teaching and her/his students then the youth was more likely to attend classes and learn. Both youth who were mothers indicated that their motivation to go to school was so that they could set an example for their child. Another youth indicated that she had decided to stop skipping several years ago after she discovered that by skipping, she was not learning anything.

While positive thoughts and comments were made regarding school, there were also several concerns brought up by interviewees that should be mentioned here as well. Specifically, two youth in particular said that while they understood that in order to learn they needed to attend school and they felt that they were so far behind, they risked ridicule from fellow students when placed in the appropriate grade. Other students expressed concerns regarding the way school officials conducted themselves, and how the “reality” of their school environment was always changed when school officials or officials from the Texas Education Association came to class. In addition, a few youth admitted that while they often blamed others for their school failure, it was actually on their shoulders to try, to ask for help, and to put forth the effort needed to actually learn.

Some additional comments made by probation officers included the fact that many of these young women are academically smart, but they often struggle with the social aspects of school. These youth report enjoying school when they have a teacher who is “cool” and works with them on their level; and that most of their probationers express the desire to graduate from high school.

When the information from the female interviews is merged into the categories discussed in the empirical review section, the following information emerges. Ten youth reported school failures and difficulties, including seven youth who had not attended school for at least the last six months with three of those seven reported not attending in the last two years. Five youth reported having been held back for at least one, two, or three years; and two youth who reported enrolling in a GED program, yet they were not satisfied with this decision because they had hoped to obtain their high

school diploma instead. With regards to Special Education services, not one of the youth interviewed reported attending any of these classes, and no youth admitted to being suspended or expelled from school. Several youth admitted to attending alternative schools and receiving referrals to school officials for behavior problems they had caused in the classroom or on school grounds. However, several youth told stories of delinquent activities that they had engaged in on school grounds, including, skipping classes, getting into fights, using drugs and alcohol, and having sex. In addition, youth interviewed did admit to experiencing varying levels of peer pressure from classmates as well as incidents of school personnel not responding when a youth made a cry for help. Finally, several youth acknowledged the “domino effect” whereby they would start off by going to school to meet up with friends, then skipping school. This was their first act of delinquency, and once away from the school grounds, their incidents of delinquency increased. Some reported hanging out with other friends who were also skipping, getting into fights, using drugs or alcohol, and even stealing cars. Ironically, many youth would return to school at the end of the day, to ride the bus home or so their parents could pick them up, and thereby concealing the truth of their activities to their parents.

In summary, there was a large amount of information revealed during the interviews regarding the educational aspects of these young women’s lives, and the challenges they face in the school environment. While there were many positive reports, there were just as many negative reports highlighting the influences the school environment can have on the personal lives of these youth. This brings the section on

personal dynamics to a close. The next section will explore family characteristics of these young women.

## 5.6 Family Dynamics

As was discussed in the empirical findings section, the family lives of female juvenile delinquents are often diverse. In order to organize the findings from these interviews, the information will be broken down into sections covering the family unit, the family's dynamics, and themes surrounding youth who have chosen to run away from home.

### *5.6.1 Family Unit*

As with most of the data in this study, it is hard to categorize the family units of these young women, because there is great variety in their home lives. The following categories help to consolidate the findings, and will be broken down further later in this section. Four youth (15%) came from intact biological parent homes, where the mother, father, and at least one sibling lived; ten youth (38%) resided in single parent/guardian homes with or without other children; eleven youth (42%) lived in homes where two adults resided, where at least one biological parent was present; and one youth (4%) lived with a non-relative adult. When recidivism data is pulled from these categories, recidivist youth comprised all four youth who came from intact biological parent homes, five youth from single parent/guardian homes, and four lived in homes where at least two adults resided.

The youth who resided in single parent/guardian homes generally lived with their mother and at least one sibling (23%); their mother only (8%); grandparent (4%),

or cousin (4%). For those youth who reported living with two adults, their family units fell into the following categories: four lived with their mother, stepfather, and at least one sibling (15%); three lived with their mother, grandparent, and at least one sibling (12%); one lived with her father, step-mother, and at least one sibling (4%); one lived with her mother, stepfather, at least one sibling, and a step-grandparent (4%); one lived with mom and mom's boyfriend (4%); and one lived with her mother, mother's boyfriend, and at least one sibling (4%). Only four young women (15% of the population) lived in a home where their mother was not present, of those four, one lived with an adult friend, one with a cousin, one with a grandparent, and one with her dad and step-mother. No respondent lived in a home without a female authority figure and thirteen (50%) lived in a home without a male authority figure.

Two of the probation districts describe the typical family unit seen in their districts and their reports were similar to those of the interviewees. POs reported that their clients often lived in single parent homes with just their mother or with mom and her boyfriend; and two districts reported youth who either had no male role models in their lives or had inadequate male role models.

#### *5.6.2 Family Dynamics*

A substantial amount of information falls under the heading of Family Dynamics including: relationships with family members; treatment by family members; and characteristics of the family. The information provided in the interviews will be grouped into these categories to help with organization.

### 5.6.2.1 Relationships with Family Members

Once the youth identified the members of their household, they were asked to describe their relationships with their parent(s)/guardian and other family members. The intention of this question was to gain a better understanding of the relationships these young women had with their family members and to gain insight into some of the dynamics of their home lives.

A majority of the youth (eighteen youth representing 69% of the population) indicated they currently had a good relationship with at least one parent/guardian/adult living in their household. Within this 69%, eight of these eighteen youth admitted to not having a good relationship with their primary guardian in the past, but they were actively working to improve these relationships. An additional four youth (15% of the population) did not identify their current parent/guardian relationships as being “good” but they did admitted to taking current strides to improve these relationships; therefore, in summary, twenty-two of the twenty-six youth interviewed admitted to currently having a good relationship with their parent/guardian or currently working to establish an improved relationship with their parent/guardian. Of the remaining four youth interviewed, three youth admitted to not getting along with their parent or guardian and not being in the process of working on these relationships either. The remaining youth stated that she got along fine with her mother when her mother was only attempting to be her friend, but when she tried to play the part of her mother, things went poorly. This brings up another revelation made by many of the interviewees; seven of the youth



(27%) described having a best friend, sister-like relationship with their mothers, rather than a parental relationship.

Some of the other positive aspects and characteristics of the relationships these young women shared with their parents/guardians included: sixteen youth (62% of the population) who acknowledged being able to talk to their parents/guardians about many of the things going on in their lives. Sixteen youth acknowledged eating at least one meal together with their families each week; sixteen youth described engaging in positive activities with their family members; and three youth acknowledged that while they may not necessarily have a good relationship with their guardians, they did get along well with another close family member. In summary, over half of the population reported positive relationships with their parents/guardians.

Yet not all reports were positive regarding family relationships, the following are a few of the more common complaints within these primary relationships. Six youth (23%) acknowledge not communicating with their families and often engaging in arguments with those living in their homes; two of these youth when asked to describe their home lives, simply stated arguing all day long as their only form of communication. Eight youth admitted to not engaging in any activities with their family members, other than the occasional trip to Six Flags. Three youth identified the mother's boyfriend as a source of stress in their relationships, yet two stated they got along well with their mothers but not with the mother's boyfriend. Finally, two youth describing their relationships with family members portrayed the relationship in terms of what kinds of things and how much the parent bought for the child.

Once information about recidivistic youth is removed from the data, the following family portrait is painted for youth in JDC for violations of their probation: eight youth have a good relationship with their family members, six believe they can talk to their parent/guardian regarding different topics, seven eat at least one weekly meal together, and six described engaging in positive activities together with her family. Yet four recidivist youth described not getting along or not communicating with their guardians and five indicated they did not engage in activities with their family members. One encouraging note is that of the thirteen youth in JDC for violating their probation, nine indicated they were currently making an effort to improve their relationships with their parent/guardian.

Information provided by the probation officers generally painted a negative picture of the relationships shared between the family and these young women. All three offices reported typically strained relationships between the youth and her mother for several reasons, including: a lack of attention paid to the youth but paid to the mother's boyfriend instead; the youth assuming a parental role with their siblings due to their mother/guardian's work schedule or lifestyle; youth who shared more of a sister relationship with their mothers; youth whose parents did not speak English and children who took advantage of that language barrier; and a lack of knowledge regarding how to cope with teenage problems and rebellion. Additional family problems included: mental health issues, high levels of conflict, use of drugs and alcohol, a history of sexual abuse, and a familial cycle of involvement in the criminal justice system.

Another question asked of all youth interviewed solicited information regarding their families' feelings regarding the youth's referral to the Juvenile Department. The majority of responses fell into two categories. Fourteen of the interviewees (54%) initially stated that their family did not like the fact that the youth was in JDC, but they also felt that her stay could be beneficial for the youth. Eight of the youth (31%) indicated that their parent/guardian did not like that the youth was in JDC and did not feel that youth deserved to be locked up. The remaining youth either had no comment, or they described their parents as feeling stressed out because of the referral, indicated that their family was tired of the youth coming to JDC, or simply stated that the family did not care.

The above mentioned information provides a glimpse into the ways that detained females interviewed described their relationships with family members to a stranger; it is important to remember these parameters, as they may have influenced the youth's description of her guardianship and their bond.

#### 5.6.2.2 Treatment by Family Members

Some of the University of Texas at Arlington's Institutional Review Boards' greatest concerns regarding this study surrounded the possible stories of abuse and neglect the interviewees might divulge during the interview process, and how this information would be handled. With any study of this nature, during the initial assent process, all youth were notified of the parameters of confidentiality that would be followed, which for this study included the following phrase: "All information that you give to me is **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL** and will **NOT** be shared. However, I am

required by law to report to the appropriate authorities, suspicion of harm to yourself, to children, or to others; if you are at risk of harm; or if you know of a child or children at risk to harm” (Appendix D, page 1). Therefore, prior to the youth answering any personal questions, they were advised of the confidentiality clause, and during the interview process, a few youth noted that they were choosing not to answer certain questions due to the parameters of the confidentiality. Thus, it is important to note that all information provided, particularly that relating to the youth’s treatment by family members and guardians was done so under the parameters of the confidentiality clause. Finally, it is also important to remember that for most of the youth interviewed, this was their first time to meet the interviewer, and often, issues as personal as the family’s dynamics may not be revealed during a first time or one time meeting.

A few interviewees brought up or alluded to the topic of abuse, either physical, emotional, or sexual, and provided varying degrees of information regarding this mistreatment. In total, two youth acknowledged physical abuse in their home, with the perpetrators being either the father or the mother, and both. These youth indicated they no longer lived with that parent and would not be returned to their custody upon discharge from the Juvenile Department. When asked about Child Protective Services’ (CPS) knowledge of this abuse, both youth stated they themselves had called CPS to advise them of the situation. One of the youth who acknowledged physical abuse and one additional youth also indicated emotional abuse had occurred within their homes. For the second youth who acknowledged emotional abuse, she recounted incidents where she and her brother were taken by their stepmother to a psychiatrist to get

psychotropic medication. She stated their former stepmother would describe behaviors exhibited by the children that are commonly associated with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) so the youth could be prescribed medication for ADD, which the stepmother would in turn either use personally, or sell to others. In both incidences of emotional abuse, the child no longer had contact with the parent and CPS was aware of one of these situations. In the situation where CPS was not aware of the abuse, the alleged perpetrator was deceased.

The final category of abuse concerns sexual abuse. Four interviewees (15%) specifically identified themselves as being the victims of sexual abuse. Three youth specifically stated they had been sexually molested, one by her mother's boyfriend, one by her stepfather, and one by her step-sister's boyfriend. The other youth stated she needed sexual victim counseling services, but did not specify why or who the perpetrator might have been. Of the three youth who specifically stated they had been sexually abused, all three recounted stories where the female family member involved at the time with the perpetrator did not believe the youth's allegations. All four of these youth also confirmed that the person behind this abuse was no longer in contact with the child, and three of the four youth indicated they would be open to receiving counseling services once out of JDC either with their family or individually to cope with this abuse.

One final note regarding abuse should be made. Two remaining youth made statements regarding not liking men who were previously involved in their family's lives because the men were putting their hands on these young women, thus implying some type of inappropriate behavior might have occurred. Both of these youth did not

wish to elaborate or provide details regarding these incidents, but both youth indicated that this person was no longer involved with their family.

Two other topics concerning treatment by family members concern the types of relationships these young women observe between their parents/guardians and the reactions of parents to delinquent acts by these youth. One interesting fact was that no young women reported or alluded to witnessing domestic violence in their homes and only one youth reported her parent having “kicked her out” of the house due to her choices.

Any time during the interview process when abuse issues were brought up, the interviewee was asked as to whether or not Child Protective Services or law enforcement authorities were aware of the situation. Out of the twenty-six youth included in these interviews, four youth spoke specifically of their family’s involvement with CPS, and from the youth’s description, two youth were still under CPS supervision at the time of the interview.

In sum, while less than 31% of the interviewees reported any incidents of abuse or mistreatment by a family member, the numbers are still cause for concern and reflect factors that could have impacted a youth’s decision to engage in delinquent activities.

#### 5.6.2.3 Characteristics of Family

The last categorization of information obtained during the interview process involves family characteristics that could have an impact on these youth’s choice to become involved in delinquent acts. For example, twelve youth (46%) reported a close family member had previously been in jail. Four youth (15%) identified their mother as

either currently or previously being in jail or on probation. Six youth (23%) described their father as being in jail currently. Five youth (19%) spoke of a sibling who had or is incarcerated or on probation. Not all youth reported the crime that led to their family members' arrest, but of those youth who did report, the charges included theft, drugs, assault of a police officer, and even murder. Additional youth reported their family members engaging in criminal acts, but did not report whether the person had gone to jail. Two youth discussed their mother's involvement in prostitution and others discussed parental use of drugs and alcohol, either with or without the child.

This leads into the next section on parental drug abuse, either with or without the child's involvement. Four youth discussed stories of seeing their immediate family member using drugs or alcohol, including one mother, two fathers, and one grandmother. Four youth also reported using drugs with their family members, one with her father, one with her mother, and two with a sibling. In addition to seeing or using drugs and alcohol with family members, three youth alleged that their parents were aware of their drug use and allowed them to use drugs in or around their home. One youth stated that her mother's rationale was that if the child was going to use drugs, she would rather her do it at home where the mother knew the child would be safe.

The topic of parental knowledge of drug use brought up another point, parental knowledge of delinquent activities and/or failure to report a child's delinquency to the appropriate authorities. This category included nine youth (35% of the population) whose parents' either knew the youth's location while on the run from authorities,

allowed the youth to stay at the home while on the run from authorities, or both, and those who allowed the youth to continue living at home and violate the laws. Of these nine youth, six of them were on probation at the time and thus were allowed to continue living at home with parental consent to engage in activities that were considered violations of the terms and conditions of their probation.

Therefore, while some youth lived in a home environment where criminal or delinquent activities were occurring, others lived in a home where delinquent activities were tolerated. For many of these youth, their home environments were the beginning influences for whether or not they chose to become involved in delinquent activities later in life.

### *5.6.3 Youth Who Run*

Information regarding youth who run away from home and the circumstances surrounding their run are often covered under the family section in other empirical studies; therefore this information will be covered here at this point. This does not mean for the youth interviewed during this study that family dynamics were the single or the root cause of a youth's decision to run away from home. The information covered in this section will highlight incidents from the interviews where youth made a connection between their choice to runaway and some issue in their home lives.

To begin, twelve youth admitted to previously running away from their homes. Two youth admitted to running away from their homes and their placements; and two youth admitted to running away from their placements. In summary, fourteen youth (54%) admitted to running away from their home or temporary residence (placement)



and six of these fourteen youth were in JDC for a violation of their probation and four of these six had violated their probation by running away from home or placement. An occasional youth attempted to quantify the number of times she had run away, and often the answer was “lots” or “a whole bunch of times”. Another interesting occurrence was that three youth reported that their parent/guardian knew their location while on the run and did not report their location to their probation officer or law enforcement official (two of the three youth were on probation). These same three youth also indicated that their parent/guardian had “given permission” for the child to reside in a place other than her home. It is important to remember that youth were not directly asked to discuss their histories or incidents of running away.

When asked to describe their reasoning for running away from home, six youth (23%) specifically stated it was so they could be with their friends or boyfriend and do the things their friends were doing. Other reasons to run included: believing she did not think she could make it in the community; believing she was grown and could make it on her own; because she did not want to follow her parent/guardian rules; because she did not like her parent/guardian; and because of drugs and the way she thought about things when she was high. Therefore, the majority of the respondents did not directly link their running away from home to a circumstance or situation in their home lives. In fact the most common reason was due to outside forces or influence, which brings us to the next section of the findings: environmental dynamics and how these impact a female adolescents choice to become involved in delinquent activities.

## 5.7 Environmental Dynamics

The category environmental dynamics is a broad grouping of information that will include findings regarding the neighborhoods and areas of residence for the interviewees as well as the social relationships of these young women.

### *5.7.1 Neighborhoods*

The youth included in this research project all reside in Dallas County, therefore at this time it is beneficial to review information on Dallas County based on statistics from the United States Census Bureau. As of 2000, the population of Dallas County was 2.2 million; the area of Dallas County includes 880 square miles with 2,522 people per square mile; 27.9% of the population is under the age of eighteen; 50.1% of the population is female; 52.6% of the population own their own homes; the median value of owner-occupied housing units was \$92,700; the median household income in 1999 was \$43,324; and 13.4% of the population lived below poverty in 1999 (United States Census Bureau, n.d.).

#### 5.7.1.1 Description of Neighborhoods

The initial interview question regarding the youth's environment asked the respondent to describe their area of residence. Half of the youth initially described the area as quiet; three youth (12%) said they lived in a good area; two youth (8%) stated that they felt safe in their neighborhoods; two youth said they lived in boring neighborhoods where they wished there were more things to do; and two youth said their area was fun. Yet, seven youth (27%) said there were bad people in their area, where people were always hanging out (19%). Eight youth (31%) acknowledged that

drugs and alcohol were been used in their neighborhoods; and six (23%) said there were gang activities around them (including 15% who described shootings and 15% who described fights). Finally, three youth (12%) indicated that they were pressured by their neighborhood peers to get involved in negative behaviors. In reviewing recidivism data, seven youth describe coming from quiet areas and the remaining six youth describe living in areas where they are surrounded by gang activities and substance abuse (four youth) and where they experience various levels of negative peer pressure (two youth).

When the probation officers were asked to describe the areas of residence for young women in JDC, the responses were quite similar to those reported by the interviewees. Specifically all three districts described youth who came from low income, gang infested neighborhoods where evidence of crime, drug use, and violence were a daily occurrence. But two districts also reported youth who came from higher socio-economic neighborhoods, where their parents went to work each day and provided nice homes and role modeled appropriate behaviors for their children. Therefore, at least in Dallas County, there is a mix of neighborhoods that produce youth referred to the probation department.

Each interviewee was then asked to describe what she liked best about her neighborhood, and here again the responses varied from positive aspects to more negative features. For example, five youth (19%) admitted to liking the negative people in their area. Four others (15%) simply stated that they were glad their friends lived close but did not specify whether these were positive or negative friends. Three

(12%) liked that stores were close and that the area was quiet; while only two youth (8%) stated that they liked their area because it was where they had grown up, the pool or basketball court was near, or the area was friendly. Finally, three youth (12%) acknowledged that there was nothing to like about their areas of residence, which brings us to the next subject.

Another question asked of each respondent was to describe things they did not like about their neighborhoods. The largest response category concerned people in the area. Seven youth (27%) admitted to not liking their neighbors. Four youth (15%) did not like it when police came through their areas. Four youth indicated there was nothing they did not like about their areas. Three youth (12%) did not like the negative peers in their areas. Three youth did not like the drugs near them, and three youth did not like anything about their areas. Further, two youth (8%) disliked the alcohol and drugs around them; two did not like the area's shootings or fights; and two youth did not like the perceived peer pressure. Yet six youth (23%) indicated that they did not like the quietness of their neighborhoods and therefore went to other parts of town to find more things to do.

In summary, there was a wide spectrum of information provided regarding the youths' areas of residence; for some youth their areas were quiet and enjoyable, while others lived in quiet areas that them to go outside of their neighborhoods to find activities. Often those activities were negative. Others lived in areas of negativity and either enjoyed getting involved in the actions going on around them, or hoped to avoid getting "caught up" in the delinquency that their neighborhoods offered. Thus, it is hard

to provide a “snapshot” of the neighborhoods of origin for these young women, because their neighborhoods are as diverse as the young women interviewed.

### 5.8 Friends and Relationships

Each young woman included in the interview process was asked to provide information regarding her friends, both her friends with whom she spends time for fun and the people that she has had dating relationships with in the past or present. Therefore, this section will be divided into these two categories accordingly.

#### *5.8.1 Friendships*

Each young lady was asked to describe her friends and the people with whom she spends time. Twelve (46%) of the youth described their friends as being primarily negative. Seven youth (27%) reported having both negative and positive friends, and the remaining seven youth reported having primarily positive friends. In addition to general descriptions, some additional factors include: twelve youth (46%) reported associating with older friends (the age difference ranged from a few years to almost twenty years and eight youth (31%) described associating with primarily male friends, more specifically, older male friends. Some of the reasons cited for associating with primarily older and/or male friends included statements that females were “messy” and gossiped too much, or that other girls had betrayed their friendships, and even some had stolen their boyfriends, while older friends were more mature than friends their own age and older friends could do more things, such as go to clubs and they had cars of their own. For youth in JDC for a violation of her probation, eleven reported associating with all negative or both positive and negative peers (84% of recidivists), six reported

typically associating with male peers (46% of recidivists), and seven youth reported that their friends tended to be older (54% of recidivists).

When the topic of friends was brought up with the probation officers, their responses mirrored many of the comments made by the interviewees. All three districts confirmed that these young women preferred to associate with older peers, especially older male friends who often influenced the young ladies to become involved in prostitution. Other friend characteristics included: youth who would follow the interviewee into negativity, gang members, and other peers they had met in JDC.

The next question asked of each respondent was to describe the types of activities in which she engaged with her friends and associates. Again there was quite a range in activities oscillating from positive to negative. The majority of youth reported simply “hanging out” with friends as being one of their favorite past-times with eighteen youth (69%) stated they just enjoyed being around their friends. Some of their more positive activities included: eating (35%), going to the movies (54%), going to the park (35%), going to the mall (31%), staying at their own houses (23%), spending time with family (8%), and playing sports (15%). Yet many youth also engaged in delinquent activities with their friends, including: using drugs or alcohol (54%), having or going to parties (23%), engaging in gang activities (15%), going to clubs (12%), selling drugs (8%), having sex (8%), and stealing (8%). Youth who were considered recidivists described hanging out and using drugs as their most frequent activities with friends (62% of recidivists).

Again, the information provided by the probation officers mirrored the information provided by the interviewees regarding the youth's activities with their friends. POs reported youth enjoying hanging out with friends, using drugs or alcohol, skipping school, engaging in gang activities, and running away.

Each young lady was also asked to describe what her friends thought of her being in JDC, and again the responses fell into primarily supportive and unsupportive reactions. For example, five youth (19%) said their friends were in JDC right now with them, five other youth said their friends would not care, and four youth (15%) said their friends would not like that the youth was being treated this way (implying fault lies somewhere other than youth's choices). Yet several youth stated their friends would be sad for their situation (23%), or JDC might be good for them (15%). Some said their friends are tired of the youth making the same bad choices (12%). For each of the youth who reported supportive responses from friends, earlier in the survey, none of these young women reported associating with primarily negative friends.

### *5.8.2 Relationships*

The interview question that was most often skipped or only briefly answered inquired about the youth's last relationship with someone they dated. It appeared many of the youth knew the parameters of abuse and therefore did not share information that could lead to a referral to Child Protective Services.

First, to categorize the relationships of these young women, all indicated whether or not they were involved in heterosexual or homosexual relationships. Out of the 26 youth interviewed, 21 (81%) reported being in heterosexual relationships and 5

(19%) reported being in homosexual relationships at the time of the interview. Of the five reportedly involved in homosexual relationships at the time of the interview, three reported being bi-sexual, and getting involved in homosexual relationships while staying in JDC; with only two youth (8%) reported being involved in homosexual relationships in the community. In addition, five youth reported their partner was also in JDC or on probation and two youth reported never having been involved in a relationship.

Regularly after the youth categorized her relationship, she used words or phrases to describe her relationship, often with vague terms. For example, fourteen youth (54%) reported being involved in a good or fun relationship and six youth (23%) described their relationships by talking about the things their partners bought for them. Of the remaining youth, three youth (12%) reported having a terrible relationship where there were problems (no one would provide further explanation). Two youth (8%), both in JDC for violating their probation, stated their boyfriends were older and that they did not want to say anything else. For those five youth who reported problems in their relationships, three youth were at JDC for violating their probation, which could have impacted the amount of information shared regarding their relationships.

Information provided by the probation officers generally painted a much more negative picture of the relationships these young women engaged in than was reported by the interviewees themselves. All of the probation offices described self destructive and abusive relationships for these young women. Their focus was to have fun, get high, engage in risky sexual behaviors, and get involved in criminal activities, even if



that meant being physically, mentally, or emotionally abused. The officers reported incidents of these youth rebelling against their family's wishes regarding the types of people they date, including rebellion based on the age, sex, and racial background of their partners. In addition, the probation officers discussed the fact that some of their clients will share information with them about their relationships and some will not.

In summary, there seems to be quite a difference in the description of relationships shared by the respondents and the probation officers; the implications of these differences will be discussed in the following chapter.

### 5.9 Summary Disclosures

There are four final questions from the interviews that have yet to be discussed. These questions pertain to the youth's insights into their delinquency and rehabilitation, the youth's opportunity to turn back time in an effort to change something about their lives, and the youth's reactions to the interview. Each question was intended to gain information into each young ladies insight regarding her situation and plans for the future.

#### *5.9.1 Insight*

In order to gather data from each youth regarding their perceptions of the root of their referral, each youth was asked specifically, "what do you think has had the greatest impact on you being here at JDC?" The majority of youth identified more than one factor that influenced their referrals, some of the more commonly mentioned reasons include: their own choices and decision making (69%), hanging around older peers (38%), using drugs or alcohol (35%), not going to school or following school rules

(19%), their mother (12%) or other family member (15%), their anger management problem (15%), not listening to their guardians (12%), thinking she was an adult (12%), running away from home (15%), not thinking before acting (12%), and prior abuse or molestation (12%). One final reason for the youth's referral cited by seven youth (27%) was that God had put them in JDC and it was to slow them down or to help the youth figure out how to change.

For youth in JDC for violating their probation the factors influencing their referral to JDC included: seven youth who cited associating with older peers, four indicated they had school difficulties, two blamed their guardians, four cited drug use, two described prior abuse or molestation, five indicated God put them in JDC, and ten cited their own choices and decision making as being one of the main factors influencing their repeated referral to the juvenile justice system.

In my opinion, many of the youth interviewed appeared to have a good understanding of the factors influencing their referral to the Juvenile Department, and their responses to the next question highlighted their possible motivation to change and understanding of the strength of those influential factors.

The probation officers were also given the opportunity to describe their perceptions concerning the factors that have influenced these young women's referrals to the probation department. In every district the first response was always family, including family issues such as violence, drugs, a lack of parenting skills, the absence of a parent, abuse, and a disconnect between the parent and child. Additional factors cited as influencing their referrals include friends and a negative image of life in general. All

three districts also concluded that very few young women ever take responsibility for being in JDC, almost all youth will either blame their families, teachers or friends, or they will simply say they do not understand what has gotten them locked up and they have not done anything wrong.

#### *5.9.2 Rehabilitation*

Each youth was asked to identify rehabilitation programs and services she thought would be beneficial to her post-JDC. There were four responses that were most often cited: counseling services either family or individual (54%), drug classes (46%), school assistance either in the form of alternative classrooms or helpful teachers (35%), and after school programs or activities (27%). Some of the other programs and services that were mentioned included: having someone to talk to who had made some of the same mistakes; being on probation for a year; employment; anger management training; and religious services. Only one youth stated that she did not need any services when she got out, she also happened to report this as being her 3<sup>rd</sup> trip to JDC. At some point during the interview process, ten youth (38%) stated this was their last trip to JDC, as they had no plans on returning.

Fortunately, when the probation officers were asked to describe which rehabilitation programs the youth were most likely to identify as being helpful upon completion of JDC, there was some congruency with the young women's responses. For example the programs mentioned as being beneficial included: two of the three probation districts described counseling services (family and individual), mentoring programs, employment services, and school assistance. The third district indicated most

of their youth did not find programs to be helpful, but the clients would attend the programs so they could successfully complete their probation requirements. Unfortunately, one of the more common responses from probation officers was there was a lack of services available to female probationers and this was one of the major hurdles they faced in their attempts to assist in rehabilitating these young women.

### *5.9.3 Chance to Change One Thing*

The rationale behind asking the question “If you could change one thing about your life what would it be and why?” was to find out if these young women would want to change some of the factors they felt influenced their referrals to the Juvenile Department. For this question, there was a great amount of variation in responses. The most common responses given were: the chance to change their negative peers (19%), the chance to set a better example for their siblings and undo the hurt they had caused their families (19%), the chance to go back and be in the right grade and do better in school (19%), the chance to change the abuse and neglect that had occurred in their lives (15%), the chance to put their families back together as a nuclear unit (15%), and the chance to make better choices (12%). Only one youth per response wanted the chance to change each of the following things: being born; becoming a mother; her age; and her parents.

The responses provided by the probation districts generally supported the youth’s answers to the chance to change one thing question; two of the three districts indicated these young women might want to change who their parents were, or prior incidents of abuse, especially if the parent/guardian did not believe the report. Other

things these young ladies might want to change included: becoming a mother at a young age, the youth's age, the youth's actions that led to academic failures, and their physical appearance.

#### *5.9.4 Reaction to Interview*

Due to the personal nature of the interview, one of the last questions asked was "What has this interview been like for you?" The results were not surprising. Nineteen of the twenty-six youth (73%) stated the interview was good and fourteen youth (54%) of those youth said it was good because they had been given the chance to talk; and eight youth (31%) said the interview was helpful, as previously they had not talked about all of the information all at once. Other responses to this question included youth who thanked me because the interview made them think (19%), or thanked me for simply listening to them (19%), and four youth (15%) specifically said the interview was different from the others because they were not simply asked yes/no questions. Thus, all youth had a positive response to the interview questions and many youth offered words of encouragement and hope that this information could help make the juvenile system better for someone, but never did they state they hoped it could improve the juvenile system for them.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION

Qualitative research methods in this study have given voice to female adolescents housed in the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center. By telling their stories, many of these young women were able to share and convey information about factors that they felt had been influential in their referral to the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department. In this chapter, the results of interviews with these young women will be discussed in context of the ecological systems perspective and prior empirical research gathered regarding this population. In addition, implications for social work policy, practice, and research will be made based on the collection of data in an effort to best address the needs of female juvenile offenders and the needs of the community in the Dallas County area.

#### 6.1 Youth Characteristics

The youth selected for inclusion in this study provided a representative sample of the youth commonly referred for services from the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department. Of the youth interviewed, 38% were Hispanic, 38% were African American, 19% were Caucasian, and 4% were of other ethnicities. However, the majority of studies discussed in the empirical review for this research project did not contain youth demographics reflective of the referrals in Dallas County, because the

majority of studies in the empirical review surveyed predominately Caucasian youth. The average age of the interviewees in this study was 15.23 years, while in the empirical review the median age was 15 to 16 years old. Offenses were another demographic category included in the empirical section and data collection of this study. With regards to offense types, the majority of young women interviewed allegedly committed offenses of a non-serious and non-violent nature. These same characteristics were found in the empirical studies surveyed as well. Therefore, based on demographics, this study included data from a more diverse racial background than the empirical studies reviewed but from a similarly aged group with similar offense patterns.

## 6.2 Risk Factors

By reviewing previous empirical literature on the subject of female juvenile offenders, a list of risk factors commonly associated with female adolescent referrals to the juvenile justice system was developed. These identified risk factors include the youth's neighborhood/community, family, drugs, mental health, education, sexual health, and peer group. The interview results from this study will now be discussed in the context of these risk factors and the ecological systems perspective.

### *6.2.1 Relationship with Family and Home Environment*

Overall, the information gathered during the interviews from this study regarding family relationships and dynamics closely resembled the information gathered from the empirical review, and provided details into both encouraging and

challenging aspects of the family lives for female adolescents living in Dallas County, Texas.

While the majority of empirical studies on female adolescent offenders tend to focus on the negative aspects of their home lives, the interview process in Dallas County female adolescents described several encouraging attributes of their families. For example, while twelve Dallas County youth (46%) reported experiencing previous difficulties in their relationships with their parent/guardian these same youth also reported making current strides to improve these relationships. This revealed that many young women realized the importance of improving their relationships with their parent/guardian, especially in the area of communication. Bloom et al., (2002) found that positive communication is often a primary protective factor for female adolescents at risk to becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. It is important to note that these young women did not indicate when they realized the importance of their family relationships, and whether or not their detainment was the impetus leading to their efforts to improve their family interactions. Consequently, while it is encouraging that these youth had begun to work on their family relationships, it is plausible and in line with the empirical research that poor family relationships, including communication, could have been a risk factor influencing these female juveniles to become involved in delinquent activities.

Additional information gathered during the interviews regarding family dynamics included seven youth (27%) who reported that rather than having a mother/daughter type relationship with their mothers, they were more likely to interact



as friends. For one youth, there would be difficulties or problems when her parent attempted to step into a parental role. These results are similar to those found by Fejes-Mendoza & Miller (1995) in that mother/daughter relationship problems are often a frequent disturbance in the lives of female adolescent offenders. Dallas County females also related that due to difficulties in their parental relationships, many of these young women reported close, strong relationships with friends. Some reported considering their friends as their family members. This revelation fits well with the Esbensen et al., (1999) study of male and female gang members where female gang members were more likely than males to report that their gang was like a family to them. From an ecological perspective, problems at home for female adolescents can often be the momentum for developing strong friendship ties, and, as will be discussed later, these friends can provide a powerful influence (both positive and negative) in the lives of female adolescent offenders.

Sixteen of the youth (62% of the population) interviewed reported living in family units who experienced recurrent problems with emotional and financial stability. For youth who came from family units with financial difficulties, the youth reported moving around often. With each move, they had to make new friends, go to a new school, and they often lived in neighborhoods with negative influences. Yet, there were not just financial concerns, eleven youth (42%) reported coming from financially stable homes but their families did not always provide them with emotional stability. For example, often youth who reported coming from more financially stable home environments reported parental relationship strain, where their parents were often more

concerned with providing the youth with financial stability and a good home, but the youth did not feel emotional support from their parents. As a result, some of these same youth reported acting out to get attention from their parents, and often chose negative routes to get this attention, such as associating with negative peers, skipping school or using drugs or alcohol.

For fourteen (54%) of the youth interviewed, there were reports of criminal activities by family members, including parental incarceration, prostitution, and the use of drugs and alcohol. Eight (31%) of these youth reported either seeing a family member use drugs and alcohol or using drugs and alcohol with a family member. Therefore for these youth it seems to be understandable how difficult it might be for them to avoid engaging in substance abusing activities. A female subject in the Belknap et al., (1997) study reported how she struggled to abstain from using marijuana because she saw her parents smoke in front of her.

Another family issue brought up by nine Dallas County females (35%) concerned parental knowledge of delinquent activities and/or failure to report a child's delinquency to the appropriate authorities. In each case, these young women also reported additional family issues where their parents were ill equipped or unprepared for parental roles. According to the Bloom et al. (2002) study these same family issues are some of the primary risk factors influencing female juvenile offenders.

At this point it is also important to mention issues surrounding youth who run away and the situations impacting their choices to run. While family dynamics are not the only environmental influence, it is important to cover this topic at this time. In all,

fourteen youth (54%) admitted to running away from their homes or temporary residence (placement) and the most commonly cited rationale for leaving home was due to outside forces or influences. These reports are similar to several other empirical studies which found that female adolescents typically have high occurrences of running away from home (Bloom et al., 2002; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Fejes-Mendoza et al., 1995; Joe et al., 1995; Kerpelman et al., 1999; Walrath et al., 2002). Of these fourteen youth who admitted to running away, some reported staying with friends or partners, while others reported moving around from place to place. Once on the run, several youth reported becoming involved in more serious offenses in order to “survive” on the streets. These activities included selling drugs or themselves, using drugs, and stealing. From the ecological perspective, often when a youth leaves home, she turns to her peers and neighborhood for support, and in doing so, the existence of negative factors and influences in her surroundings often tempt her to becoming involved in additional delinquent activities.

In summary, the family difficulties and concerns reported by Dallas County females have also been found in previous empirical studies with female adolescent offenders. Previous empirical studies have also revealed how these family concerns influence female adolescent referrals to the juvenile justice system. Thus, while the interviews in this research project have not provided enough information to assess the strength of the family’s influence on the life of a Dallas County female adolescent offender, it can be determined the family is part of the ecological influences on these young women. Further, problems at home often lead a young woman to look for

support outside of the family unit, and the sources of support she chooses can further contribute to her involvement in delinquent activities leading to her referral to the juvenile justice system.

### *6.2.2 Relationships and Activities with Friends*

The Dallas County female interviews contained four questions regarding the relationships shared between the female detainees and their friends, both the friends with whom they spend time for fun and the people they have had dating relationships with in the past or present. These four questions along with responses provided at other times during the interview process revealed a wide range of information about the types of friendships and the strength of the influence friendships have on these young women's choice to become involved in delinquent activities.

Nineteen youth (73%) interviewed indicated they were friends with either all negative or both positive and negative peers and frequently engaged in activities with their negative and positive peers. Some of the negative activities these young women engaged in with their friends included using drugs and alcohol, going to parties, engaging in gang activities and engaging in delinquent activities. While the Dallas County females were not specifically asked as to whether or not they were with someone at the time of their offense which led to their referral, Fejes-Mendoza & Miller (1995) found 60% and 81% of their two samples of offenders were with others at the time of their arrest that led to their incarceration. Therefore, Dallas County females who were engaging in deviant acts with their friends were putting themselves in

situations that could lead to their referral to the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department.

As mentioned earlier in the family section, due to difficulties at home and in their family relationships, many youth reported having close or very close relationships with their friends or partners. Several of the youth who reported having strong bonds with their friends also reported turning first to their friends when trying to cope with a difficult or stressful situation. One reason why this may be of a concern is because the interview data also revealed some youth often engage in negative coping mechanisms with their friends (such as substance abuse and delinquent acts). This will be discussed later in the emotional functioning section.

Additional friendship information revealed during the Dallas County interviews included ten young women (38%) who reported they preferred to associate with and even date older men. Yet very little detail was gathered regarding these older male relationships, often due to a young woman knowing the restrictions of confidentiality and the boundaries of what the interviewer could keep confidential. Yet the significance of these older male relationships might give rise to concern for both parents and Dallas County Probation Officials as according to one study conducted by Belknap & Holsinger (1997). Some of the youth interviewed discussed dating much older boyfriends, believing these older men knew how to treat a young woman. However these older male relationships often correlated to how these young women ended up in jail, for drug charges and other deviant acts.

From a more positive perspective, fourteen youth interviewed in Dallas County (54%) reported associating with at least some positive peers and engaging in positive activities with these peers. Some of their positive activities included: eating; going to the movies, mall, and park; and playing sports. This occurrence is encouraging as Bloom et al., (2002) found positive peer influences and community service are important protective factors in the lives of female juvenile offenders. Therefore while some of the peer influences can be negative, there are also pro-social relationships in the ecological systems of these young women and these positive friendships could be a source of support in rehabilitation as well as preventative measures.

### *6.2.3 Educational Experiences*

Each of the young women interviewed provided insightful information regarding their school histories and environment. Some described encouraging aspects, while others described scenes of failure and tribulations. Those youth reporting encouraging aspects (46% of the population) described courses they enjoyed, teachers who provided help and guidance, and schools that offered positive activities to keep them busy after school. However, some positive reports were not really all positive, instead the things these young women enjoyed about school did not relate to learning, but instead, related to the social environment provided by their schools. In addition to enjoying spending time with friends at school, many youth reported going to school was the beginning of a delinquent cycle, whereby they went to school to meet up with friends and then they would skip school and engage in further delinquent acts off of the school grounds.

For those youth who discussed their school experiences in generally negative terms, there were two categories of negative experiences, those related to the school environment and those related to school activities. Ten youth (38%) in the Dallas County sample reported educational failures and difficulties that resulted in extended periods of truancy from school and four (15%) youth who described experiencing negative peer pressure in their schools. Regardless of the root of the negative feelings towards school, Bloom et al., (2002) found female juvenile offenders reported early school difficulties and negative attitudes towards school as early warning signs of delinquency and schools offered a prime opportunity for early intervention in the lives of young women at risk for future delinquency.

Another category of information provided in the Dallas County interviews described the relationships between female juvenile offenders and their school systems, including the personnel assigned to address their educational needs. Thirteen youth (50%) provided negative feedback about teachers and described how these difficult teacher relationships negatively impacted the youth's view and approach to learning. In contrast, ten youth (38%) reported positive student/teacher relationships and discussed how these teachers made learning fun and interesting. These teachers provided instruction appropriate to the students on the student's level, and often the teachers provided support and understanding to these young women regarding the situations they were facing outside the school environment. From the empirical review, it was learned that McKnight and Loper (2002) found being treated fairly by teachers to be among the resiliency factors supporting delinquent adolescent females.

Therefore the educational system is a complex element in the ecological systems of female juvenile delinquents. While it can be a source of prevention and intervention, it can also be a source of emotional strife, and its utility in the life of a female adolescent must be carefully crafted so each youth entering the educational system can receive the maximum benefit from her education. The social environment of school must also be considered in the ecological perspective, as it appears positive social experiences can lead to school being seen as a support system and negative social experiences can lead to school being the beginning of delinquent cycles.

#### 6.2.4 Substance Abuse

The young women interviewed in Dallas County provided wide ranges of experiences in each category of analysis, yet the smallest amount of variation came from the information provided about drug and alcohol abuse. Out of the twenty-six youth interviewed, twenty-two (85%) reported having used drugs and/or alcohol at some point during their lifetimes. These results are similar to the Emerson et al. (2001) study that found 89% of the 60 females surveyed had used drugs or alcohol in their lifetime. The Dallas County youth also revealed the most commonly used substances were marijuana, alcohol, and cocaine or crack and 42% of the young women interviewed reported using four or more illicit substances at least one time in their past. Thus, not only are these young women willing to use drugs and/or alcohol, they often will experiment with a variety of types of drugs, ranging from prescription, to synthetic, to manmade substances. One of the main reasons why drug use is of such a concern with female adolescents is because of the decisions made while under the influence of



drugs and/or alcohol. For example, Fejes-Mendoza & Miller (1995) found 47% and 53% of their two samples had used drugs during the crimes that led to their incarceration.

Another concern regarding data collected from Dallas County females related to their knowledge of drugs and alcohol. While all of the probation officers contended the youth “knew more that they did,” the level of knowledge described by the young women was elementary and revealed that even though these young women generally understood that drugs were “bad” for them, the youth were still willing to experiment with illicit substances with little regard for the consequences. Additional information provided regarding substance abuse related to the rationale behind these young women’s use of illegal substances; six youth (23%) interviewed indicated that they had used drugs in the past when faced with tough or stressful situations. Further discussion regarding drug use will be found in the next section related to the coping methods of these young women.

From an ecological standpoint, the influence of substance abuse can be found within several different subsystems, including family, friends, neighborhood/environment, and even education. Therefore, when rationally discussing treatment and prevention approaches with female adolescents, substance abuse concerns must be addressed, and the approach must be diverse so that each level of influence in their environment can be taken into account.

### 6.2.5 Emotional Functioning and Coping Mechanisms

As has been referred to previously, each Dallas County respondent was asked to provide details into her current and past emotional functioning, view of self, and coping mechanisms. The majority (77%) of the young women interviewed described themselves in a generally positive manner and reported experiencing positive feelings in the community on a typical day. In addition, out of the twenty-six youth interviewed, only nine interviewees (35%) acknowledged experiencing feelings of depression during their lifetimes and three (12%) acknowledged experiencing feelings of low self-esteem and self-worth. These numbers are encouraging when compared to the Goldstein et al. (2003) study that found 63% of their female adolescent offenders to be depressed and 56.3% experiencing anxiety. Thus it would appear that female adolescent offenders in Dallas County experience a more positive emotional outlook and greater emotional stability than other incarcerated females surveyed.

In addition to present mood and general view of self, Dallas County females were surveyed regarding their coping methods used in tough or stressful situations. In response to this question, the females surveyed provided a less optimistic picture; for example, 39% opted to stay to themselves, 31% used drugs or alcohol when under stress, 27% reported fighting, 15% chose to run away, and 12% reported screaming and arguing. However, there were not only negative coping skills reported, as a significant portion of youth also described positive coping methods such as talking to someone, crying, praying, and writing. Unfortunatley, upon further analysis taking into account recidivism statistics, it appeared that youth who had been referred back to the Dallas

County Juvenile Detention Center for a repeat trip were most likely to employ poor coping methods such as using drugs and/or alcohol, running away, and even fighting. In addition, when assessing recidivistic youth only, the percentage of youth with a positive view of themselves drops to 50%, the percentage experiencing depression increases to 47%, while 65% reported experiencing problems with emotion management. These findings for recidivating youth are in line with research conducted by Archwamety et al. (1998) who found that 47.8% of recidivists had a history of suicide or depression versus 39.8% of non-recidivists. In summary, it is important to note that female youth who recidivate in the juvenile justice system are more likely to experience difficulties with emotional functioning and coping mechanisms when compared to first time referrals to the juvenile system.

In general it appears that while Dallas County female adolescents may typically describe themselves in a positive manner, they tend to lack coping skills to appropriately manage the variety of stressors with which they come into contact within their environments. Further, female juveniles with repeat referrals to the juvenile justice system appear to be in need of support services which should be initiated during their first referral in order reduce the chances for a repeat referral. On the whole, throughout the interview process these young women have discussed stressful events being produced from their interactions with all forces within their social environment, thus practical coping methods could be useful in every aspect of the ecological systems approach.

### 6.2.6 Impact of the Neighborhood

Dallas County is a diverse region which provides residents with a wide variety of neighborhoods in which to live, work, and raise a family. Economically segregated and integrated neighborhoods can be found throughout the various municipalities and provide residents with multiple housing arrangements including single or multifamily homes and apartments. Of the youth surveyed in Dallas County, fourteen (54%) described coming from generally positive and “good” neighborhoods, while twelve (46%) described coming from typically “bad,” crime infested neighborhoods where it was easy to find people engaging in negative behaviors. In addition, six (25%) of the youth who described living in positive neighborhoods also described knowing locations close to their neighborhoods where they could go to get involved in delinquent activities. Therefore, simply living in a “good” neighborhood is not going to automatically protect a teenage youth from engaging in negative activities, and as described in the family section, occasionally youth who come from middle class homes engage in delinquent acts in order to get attention from their parents who are focused on providing financial security for their children.

For those families that live in the more economically disadvantaged neighborhoods of Dallas County, the youth in the area reported that they were confronted daily with gangs (23%), violence (15%), drugs (31%), and negative peer pressure (12%). These reports are similar to those found by Molidor (1996) where the majority of the young women’s [in the sample] neighborhoods were rife with poverty, alcohol and drug use and distribution, and gang violence” (p. 253). But youth

interviewed also described living in areas of disadvantage to be a positive influence, as there were four Dallas County youth (15%) who reported witnessing and hearing stories in their neighborhoods of the damage drugs can cause as being their main reason for abstaining from substance use.

One final environmental issue deserves mentioning here, and it is the topic of abuse, physical, emotional or sexual, in which the perpetrator being either a family member or another individual. As mentioned in the results chapter, very few youth acknowledged being the victim of abuse either in their homes or community; two youth (8%) acknowledged physical abuse in their homes, two youth (8%) acknowledged emotional abuse, and six youth (23%) either stated or alluded to previously being sexually abused. These numbers fall short in comparison with the empirical studies reviewed, such as Acoca's (1998) report where 56% of the 956 female juvenile offenders interviewed reported some form of sexual abuse and Sanger et al. (2000) who found "63% of the delinquents [incarcerated female teenagers] experienced either emotional mistreatment, physical injury, physical neglect and/or sexual abuse" (p. 301).

Therefore, it would appear that Dallas County female juveniles are much less likely to be abused than female juvenile delinquents across the United States, and while these numbers are encouraging, it is important to remember that for the majority of the youth interviewed, this was their first time to meet the interviewer, and often, issues as personal as the family's dynamics and acts of abuse may not be revealed during a first time or one time meeting. It is important to remember that all information provided,

particularly that relating to the youth's treatment by family members and guardians was done so under the parameters of the confidentiality clause.

From the ecological perspective, a youth's environment can contain influences ranging from poverty, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, gangs, and abuse, thus the impact of these factors must be addressed with each female who enters the juvenile justice system. Dallas County data has demonstrated the multifaceted challenge posed by the environment in which a teenager is raised. Yet, the Dallas County data has also demonstrated some of the positive environmental aspects provided for teenagers. Therefore, while the environment does pose to be a risk factor, it can also provide protective factors for female adolescents at risk for becoming involved in juvenile delinquency.

#### 6.2.7 Situation Surrounding Referral to the Juvenile Department

Each of the Dallas County youth interviewed were asked to describe their feelings regarding being in the juvenile detention center (JDC) and what it was like for them the first time they entered the detention center. Regarding their first trip to JDC, the majority of youth (81%) described initial feelings of fear, anxiety, and shock as well as images of possible mistreatment or abuse similar to scenes from television and movies. The remaining youth indicated an indifferent attitude towards JDC because they believed it to be easy or their stay would be short. In addition, for those youth who described being initially scared or nervous about their referral, the majority of them described becoming more relaxed and even accustomed to JDC and that these initial feelings of fear and anxiety quickly subsided once they physically moved further into

the detention center. For the most part, these recollections are encouraging, as they demonstrate a belief and feeling by the detainees that JDC is a safe place where they will be treated fairly, but these reports also reveal how some detainees may not view their referral to the detention center as being a serious issue.

In addition to describing their initial responses, each youth was asked to describe their overall impression and reactions to being detained. The overwhelming response was that JDC was hard. This impression was attributed to not allowing the youth the freedom to make many of their own decisions and the limitations placed on family interactions. There were a few youth (23%) who stated they had gotten accustomed to being detained in JDC. These responses reveal how many of the youth see JDC as being a strict situation that enforces limits on their decision-making and choices. Few youth acknowledge JDC being a helpful situation in which they learn to use increased self-restraint and receive guidance to make better decisions in the community. Thus, while detained females in Dallas County may feel safe in the detention center, it appears that they are unaware of the learning opportunities being provided to them through the structured environment.

The final discussion topic pertaining to the situation surrounding each youth's referral to the juvenile department involved specifically asking each youth to describe the factors they felt had the greatest influence on their current situation. The overwhelming majority of youth (96%) took responsibility for at least part of their referral to the juvenile system and many youth identified more than one factor that had influenced their decision-making. Interestingly, only 23% of the respondents indicated

that a family member or factor had influenced their referral to the juvenile probation department; this is contrary to what was found in the empirical review and reported by the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Officers. There maybe a number of reasons for this, and in my opinion, some of the reasons could include: the youths desire to be seen as mature for taking responsibility for her behavior or even the youths inability to assess the broader impact of environmental factors on her decision making. Despite this occurrence, in my opinion, based on the information provided during the interview, most of the youth appeared to have a good understanding of the factors influencing their referrals, at least cognitively.

In summary, it appears the youth interviewed are capable of acknowledging many of the ecological pressures influencing their referrals to the juvenile justice system, yet these youth appear to lack the coping skills, support, and knowledge necessary to manage these pressures. In addition, these youth may not be fully aware of how to utilize information being provided to them through a variety of channels, including the juvenile department, which might assist them in successfully navigating through and coping with these environmental forces.

### 6.3 Implications

Besides providing a voice and understanding of the risk factors influencing female juvenile offenders in Dallas County, the second major goal of this study was to identify the implications of these findings on practice, policy, and research options which could best address the needs of female juvenile offenders and the needs of the communities in the Dallas County area. The implications will be discussed based on



the ecological systems approach and the social work mindset of treating a person within their environment, including all possible environmental factors and influences.

### *6.3.1 Practice Implications*

The results of the Dallas County interviews show the typical female juvenile offender to be between 15 and 16 years old, of minority descent, and typically being referred for a non-violent offense or violation of her probation. The environmental factors influencing their referrals include family dynamics, neighborhood pressures, substance abuse, mental health concerns, educational difficulties, and peers. Additionally, after a youth receives her first referral to the juvenile justice system, if she exhibits poor coping skills, she is at greater risk for receiving a subsequent referral and receiving greater sanctions from the juvenile department. On the whole, the implications of these findings are limited to juvenile departments in large metropolitan areas serving youth with similar environmental influences.

Coming from a social work context, the diversity of concerns facing these young women fit well with the concept of treating an individual from a person-in-environment approach. Furthermore, because the majority of these young women will return to their same neighborhoods upon release from the juvenile detention center, it seems logical to provide intervention efforts in their neighborhoods and communities. Practice efforts with these young women could also benefit from the social work ideals of strengths based intervention, focusing on the assets that these young women, their families, neighborhoods and communities already have in place.

Beginning with factors leading to a referral and ending with social service agencies interacting with youth involved in the probation department, the gamut of social work practice implications is diverse. As was discussed in the interviews, each youth's family has often worked with another social service agency prior to the youth's referral to the juvenile system, including but not limited to: Child Protective Services, Adult Probation or Parole, Juvenile Probation for another sibling, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. It is during these interactions with other social service agencies that preventative measures could be taken in order to provide support and counseling for the family unit. Examples of such social welfare services could include support groups for children of incarcerated parents, thorough needs and risk assessments for social program recipients, or communication training for families referred for possible abuse and neglect issues.

In addition, based on information gathered from the young women regarding their lack of coping skills and knowledge of effective problem solving approaches, it would seem logical that practice based preventative measures with youth whose families are involved with other social welfare agencies could also come from an educational approach. From a prevention stand point, social service programs could assist these youth in learning ways to positively cope and make positive decisions when faced with environmental stressors, such as their neighborhood surroundings, peer pressure, and possible anti-social family values. Yet a youth does not even need to come from a family that is involved with other social service agencies, as these

educational interventions could also be implemented in schools and community based programs.

From an educational perspective, school districts are provided daily contact with youth in all stages of delinquent activities, and many youth described positive educator interactions that provided support and understanding to the youth's situation as well as education at a level conducive to individual learning abilities. Examples of these positive educational experiences which could be instituted district and countywide include self-paced learning centers and mentoring programs. Schools could also assist in the teaching of problem solving, decision making, and coping skills through curriculum in life skills or health courses typically offered to pre-adolescent and adolescent youth as part of a school's core curriculum.

It is easy to conceive that there are already programs in existence in the school districts, through school social workers and programs such as Communities in Schools, which might provide these support and educational services for all students, yet there may be an underutilization of the programs by at-risk female adolescents due to their poor attendance records or simply because of limited awareness. Therefore, school districts on the whole may be taking strides to improve the school experiences for at-risk teenagers, but there are still, and always will be youth who do not utilize the services intended for their benefit. Half of the young women interviewed reported various difficulties with their teachers, leading to the conclusion that there appears to be a real need for immediate improvement.

At the community level, efforts should be targeted towards preventative measures with at-risk youth in their early adolescent years as well as interventions with youth who may have already become involved in the juvenile justice system. For preventative measures, pre-teenaged youth are at a critical stage in their development, as they are beginning to develop their sense of self and independence. It is during this developmental time that educational efforts could be utilized to teach coping and decision making skills. During this stage, pre-adolescents and adolescents are also deeply invested in their need to belong, and their family or friends may satisfy this belonging. However, the need should be fulfilled in a manner that does not subject the child to violence and abuse. Therefore, community based interventions should be developed so that these young ladies are able to mature in a comfortable and safe setting. Some examples of such interventions include Boys & Girls Clubs, after-school programs, extra-curricular activities that are free for “at-risk” youth, and Big Sisters groups. It is recommended that these groups utilize family involvement so the children feel that their families are supportive, but also to help address the needs of the family that may lead the child to “flee” home to the safety of the streets, gangs, or negative peers.

Another practice level implication that must be addressed is the tendency for youth on a first time referral to the juvenile justice system to be treated with such leniency. For Dallas County youth who were considered recidivists, many reported their first referral to a detention facility occurring at the age of 13 or 14, and almost all reported that the system’s response was to hold them for a few hours, counsel them, and

release them back to their families. This reflects a potentially serious problem within the criminal justice system of not taking offenses by younger adolescents as a serious threat and this practice possibly returns the child to a disorderly home situation from which the child might have initially fled to the “safety” of the streets or might have led the child to act out in order to gain attention from family members.

For youth who are referred to the juvenile justice system and detained for a period greater than 24 hours, the services provided throughout the system need to be improved so that they target the specific needs of a female juvenile offender, including: substance abuse education and treatment; physical and mental health care; education regarding high-risk behaviors, including pregnancy; educational needs-assessments & programs targeting needs, including remedial tutoring; comprehensive interventions that target the entire family environment, not just the individual in custody; family support services which educate guardians on the risks and precedence of holding their child accountable for their behaviors; counseling services which provide support for youth who have been abused, either physically, emotionally, or sexually; education about relationships and activities which can increase a youth’s belief in her abilities to be successful; education about coping skills and strategies; and programs addressing the violent potential and practices of female juvenile offenders.

Finally, due to the some of the significant discrepancies between reports by detainees and probation officers, the system could benefit from providing education and training to improve the youth’s understanding and communication with probation officers who are employed to assist the youth in their rehabilitation efforts as well as

protecting society from delinquent acts. At the same time, probation officers could benefit from training courses that target improving their communication with female offenders and their families so that a greater partnership can be created. In addition, a potential useful practice approach exists in the form of a partnership in rehabilitation between the youth and the probation officer. Many of the youth appear to have an adequate understanding of the forces influencing their referral to the juvenile system, thus a youth's opinion should be given strong consideration when selecting intervention methods to best help her cope with environmental stressors impacting her decision making.

Additionally, probation officers are typically not just working with families who have a child involved in the juvenile justice system, as many families are also challenged by issues such as financial security, childcare, employment, housing, and substance abuse. Therefore, in order for probation officers to provide a more supportive partnership for rehabilitation, officers need to be able to provide referrals and information regarding additional social services that can enable a family to better cope with the forces in their environments.

### *6.3.2 Policy Implications*

The findings from the interviews with Dallas County female juvenile offenders reveal a number of policy implications. First, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974 needs to continue to receive reauthorizations and formula grants to states and states need to continue to assess and develop programs which provide services for female juvenile delinquents in the juvenile justice system.

The State of Texas also needs to continue to utilize federal funding to identify and utilize programs targeting the needs of at-risk females and assess whether or not these programs are adequately addressing the needs of today's female juvenile offender. In Dallas County, as evidenced from probation officer and detainee reports, additional funding needs to be provided to services that best meet the needs of Dallas County offenders, specifically counseling services, drug classes, educational programs, and after-school activities. Yet, due to the fact that many of these programs are currently in existence, it is imperative that funds be allocated so that comprehensive program evaluations can be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the current services and additional areas for intervention.

As mentioned in the practice implications section, probation officers could benefit from greater knowledge of the social services available for clients who are struggling with other areas of functioning including financial security, childcare, employment, housing, and substance abuse. Yet, the responsibility does not simply lie on the shoulders of the probation department. From a policy perspective, all social services provided within the Dallas County and State of Texas systems should be aware of and able to work together in a partnership that provides interventions from an ecological perspective to target the whole individual. As evidenced during the interviews, there were a few youth who were receiving services from the probation department and Child Protective Services at the same time. There are obvious prevention and intervention benefits for this partnership and these allied efforts could provide an intervention model for other social services working in partnership with the

juvenile department. Unfortunately this topic was not addressed during this project and therefore will be discussed in the next section on research implications.

Finally, there is a need for policy interventions in the educational arena. Due to the variety of educational experiences encountered by these young women, there appears to be a strong need for inter-district consistency and cooperation among school districts within a given county, so that effective methods can be shared and the educational futures of youth can be addressed in positive and reliable patterns. While there was not any single district which could be identified as consistently employing effective practices with female juvenile offenders, there were several effective methods being used in a variety of districts. In addition, according to the U.S. Department of Justice, students who drop out of school are 3.5 times more likely to be arrested than high school graduates. Therefore, the emphasis on educational success is specifically important due to knowledge that has been gained from data compiled regarding adult offenders demonstrating education to be an important protective factor for adult involvement in the criminal justice system.

### 6.3.3 Research Implications

Due to the relative scarcity of research regarding female juvenile offenders, there are a multitude of issues that could be researched in an effort to fully develop the body of knowledge regarding risk factors influencing female adolescent delinquency. As is the goal with all research, this project has added to the body of knowledge, but in comparison to the larger picture, this has only provided a diminutive portion of information.



The current study looks at risk factors influencing female juvenile delinquency in Dallas County from a qualitative approach that has allowed detainees a chance to have their voices heard. A similar study that allows for a less restricted qualitative interview needs to be conducted so that more detail can be gained from the detainees. When appropriate circumstances arise, a less restricted qualitative interview could allow the interviewer to ask additional exploratory questions than those simply listed on the questionnaire. Further, if a less restrictive interview format is utilized, it is plausible that a grounded theory could be developed from the data and this grounded theory could be utilized to better address the pathways into delinquency.

Based on information gathered from this qualitative study, basic themes have been identified regarding the environmental factors influencing the young women in the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center. In order to gain greater understanding of the population of females referred for services with the Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department, a mixed method qualitative and quantitative instrument could be developed. One of the goals of utilizing a multi-method approach would be to look at the factors influencing these young women in more depth and to talk to a greater sample of youth. Each day of data collection for this study provided a pool of fifty or more female youth to choose from and on average between two and four youth were interviewed each day. Therefore due to the volume of detainees and possible increased speed of use of a multi-method questionnaire, the data collected could provide a more composite view of the factors influencing these young women.

Another option would be for these interviews to take place over several visits, so that greater rapport and a heightened level of disclosure could be established. In addition, follow up interviews could be conducted post-release from the detention center to determine if a youth's account of risk factors changes once she is returned to the community. These follow up interviews could also be conducted throughout the rehabilitation process to determine if the young woman feels that she is receiving adequate rehabilitation services and to assess the impact of these rehabilitation efforts on her decision making.

Future research studies in Dallas County could also seek to include additional sources of information and more advanced triangulation of data, specifically the inclusion of case files for these youth, interviews with parents and assigned probation officers, as well as interviews with detention center staff could all provide greater detail and depth to the current understanding of risk factors influencing female adolescent referrals. In addition, by including additional sources of information, a more composite understanding of the juvenile justice system in Dallas County could be obtained. Another avenue for future research studies in Dallas County could be to conduct a study with male juvenile youth from a qualitative approach in order to determine similarities and differences in risk factors, rehabilitation efforts, and protective factors.

In order to gain greater understanding of the impact of risk factors for female adolescents, another research approach would involve the inclusion of youth who are not yet involved in the juvenile justice system. Due to the wide range of factors influencing female adolescents referred to the juvenile justice system, it is

understandable that the peers of detainees who are not involved in the juvenile system may be experiencing some of the same risk factors. Therefore, a research study that included comparing a sample of youth in the community from the same peer group as those interviewed might provide greater insight into why some youth are referred to the juvenile system and others are not. Some of the protective factors involved could include variations in coping methods, family units, associates, exposure to drugs and alcohol, self-esteem, and treatment by law enforcement.

Research also needs to be conducted with youth from a preventative standpoint in order to determine if early interventions with at-risk youth on specific environmental influences can reduce a youth's future incidents of delinquency. These research projects would require the identification and implementation of intervention methods with at-risk pre-teen and teenage female youth in family, school, and community settings. For example, if adult probation and parole services began targeting the children of the offenders, research projects would need to be conducted in order to determine the most effective and cost-efficient interventions which could function as preventative tools for future delinquency.

One final note on research options has been previously discussed at the end of the theoretical framework chapter. Since this study was only able to identify the factors and some of their possible courses influencing females in Dallas County to engage in delinquent acts, a future project should attempt to validate all of the possible trajectories for the identified risk factors and work to identify the strengths of these paths. By

identifying the paths and their strengths, strong, empirically based practice implications could be developed from a preventative approach.

At this point, the research possibilities are quite expansive and other important research agendas could include: the utilization of theoretical frameworks in current research of female juvenile offenders in order to determine if a “gendered” theory of delinquency is warranted; the development and use of a standardized measure to assess the influence and impact of environmental factors; employment of more race-reflective samples and random sampling; the feasibility of national data collection and tracking systems so that a broader sample could be utilized; and assessment of the relationship between trauma and delinquency in the lives and future of female adolescents.

#### 6.4 Conclusion

This research project aimed at providing a voice for Dallas County female juvenile offenders; it was hoped this voice could help advance awareness and understanding of the environmental factors with the greatest impact on each child’s choice to become involved in delinquent activities. By speaking directly to the youth currently involved in the juvenile justice system and the probation officers assigned to work with them, the knowledge gained was based directly on first hand experiences.

Through the interview process, these young women shared both encouraging and troubling stories regarding their environments including descriptions of temptations and opportunities faced around every corner. Based on their stories, it was learned that their home lives are often sources of negative influence and lure, that their relationships with their families were at times distant and unsupportive, and often problems at home

led these young women to turn to their friends as a source of support and love. Yet it was also learned that some of these same young women were attentive to the problems at home and the level of influence these problems had in their larger environment, and frequently these young women were making strides to improve their relationships with their families.

Interview data also revealed the vast impact a youth's peer group and her neighborhood could have on her decision to become involved in delinquent or negative activities. These youth described a fairly consistent pattern of lacking appropriate coping skills including the use of drugs or alcohol and engaging in risky or delinquent activities, which could lead to greater involvement in the juvenile or even criminal justice system. Yet many youth also described their substance abuse as simply an activity to do with friends or family and these young women were likely to experiment with a variety of drugs despite having some knowledge of the side effects and potential risks associated with usage.

Highlights from this research project came in the form of awareness and understanding on the youth's part regarding her situation and the factors with greatest influence on her referral. Many young women had a satisfactory grasp and perception of their pathways into delinquency; unfortunately, they lacked the tools to change or better cope with their surroundings. Therefore, it is society's responsibility to respond to the needs of these young women and develop techniques to teach coping and decision making skills to assist these youth in changing their current situation. More specifically, it is the responsibility of Dallas County residents, to respond to the needs

of these young women, before the number of female youth in the detention center goes from an average of fifty youth a day to one hundred or more.

The young women interviewed, their peers in the juvenile justice system, and female adolescents in the community who have not yet reached the juvenile department are perceptive, not only of themselves but also the world around them. Therefore, while it appears to be quite an impossible task to change the world they live in, it is possible to help these young women change the way they interact with their environment. By speaking out regarding environmental risk factors, these young women have enabled practitioners, researchers, and policy makers to gain first hand knowledge regarding what it is like to be a female adolescent detained in Dallas County. For the risk taken by each youth in sharing her story and for her courage, I will be forever grateful.

APPENDIX A

STUDIES INCLUDED IN EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Author	Date	Title	Study Type	Sample size, Setting & Demographics	Stats used	Results	Implications	Next area of research
Acoca	1998	Outside/inside: The violation of American girls at home, on the streets, and in the juvenile justice system	Non-experimental & exploratory	956 cases of FJD & 193 interviews with FJD - no indication of race	Measures of Central Tendency	The victimization of FJD in their homes, schools and streets is continued once they enter the juvenile justice system.	RTC for females need to adhere to current laws governing the treatment of female offenders in custody & programs with FJD need to be investigated more closely to ensure resident safety.	Research into the treatment of FJD by correctional facilities; research into how effective treatment programs of FJD can be adapted into schools, homes & the juvenile justice system.
Archwamety & Katsiyannis	1998	Factors related to recidivism among delinquent females at a state correctional facility	Non-experimental & Descriptive	96 FJD, 12-18 years old in an RTC - 48% C, 25% AA, 16% H, 9% NA, 1% O	Logistic Regression	Age at first offense & location of prior residence (urban) were the most significant predictors of recidivism.	Findings are similar to previous studies with FJD and MJD & age at first offense is most important indicator of recidivism.	Research should explore if early intervention with high-risk youth will reduce drugs & crime; will alternative education programs help reduce drop out rates; & could non-urban



								placements help with rehabilitation.
Bachman & Peralta	2002	The relationship between drinking and violence in an adolescent population: Does gender matter	Non-experimental & Descriptive	2,643 seniors, 18 years old and younger, attending public and private high schools - 46% M & 54% F, 85% C, 15%AA	Multivariate Logistic Regression	Heavy alcohol/drug use increased violent offending regardless of grades, race, or gender; high grades in school reduced violence; race did not impact gender usage; & two parent households meant girls would be less likely to use substances.	Individuals working with juveniles need to address drug/ alcohol & violence with both sexes; men appear to be socialized to be more violent.	Future research must examine effects of drugs & alcohol on behavior for adolescents, socialization that legitimizes violence in men needs to be examined, and alcohol advertisement's effect on juveniles needs to be assessed.
Belknap & Holsinger	1997	Understanding incarcerated girls: The results of a focus group study	Non-experimental & Descriptive	58 girls in 6 focus groups in group homes, on probation, in detention centers, on house arrest,	Measures of Central Tendency	Delinquent girls felt disrespected, wanted punishment sooner from the system, life & family	Need to facilitate public education training & information sharing about gender specific issues; current	Research should include more qualitative & quantitative data on Ohio girls in juvenile justice system; need studies to track

				and/or diversion programs (13-20 years old) (75%AA, 25%W) and 42 professionals that work with FJD in 5 focus groups (50%WF, 50%AAF, AAM, WM)		experiences have been different. Professionals felt criminal justice system was neglecting FJD & family has strong impact on female involvement in criminal justice system.	services avail to FJD need to be identified and assessed to measure effectiveness & appropriateness of programs; more money needs to be allocated for female specific programs.	female offenders & implement better data collection at a state level.
Bloom, Owen, Piper-Deschenes & Rosenbaum	2002	Moving toward justice for female juvenile offenders in the new millennium: Modeling gender-specific policies and programs	Non-experimental & Descriptive	A survey of officials from various state agencies, a series of interviews and focus groups with female youth and professionals serving the population	Measures of Central Tendency	The family, victimization, violence & drugs are the most important risk and protective factors for FJD and individual problems are second most important risks.	Treatment of FJD needs to provide gender specific programming that includes the family issues, substance abuse education and the role of abuse.	Research on at-risk and delinquent female youth should look at causes of FJD, population descriptions, needs assessments, offense patterns & trends & effective program models.

Brotherton	1996	"Smartness," "toughness," and "autonomy": Drug use in the context of gang female delinquency	Non- experimental & exploratory	46 F gang members in the community from 3 gangs; PHP was all AA; ESP was all H; LL was all H; 15-22 years old	Qualitative Analysis	Gang females are not separate from society, all females needed income and they used one of the three techniques to adapt.	What gang females reflect is the peculiar intersection of class, race, and gender among inner-city poor. They are resourceful & resilient.	None stated
Cauffman, Feldman, Waterman & Steiner	1998	PTSD among female juvenile offenders	Non- experimental & Descriptive	96 FJD, mean age of 17.2 years old, in a correctional facility - 23% C, 21% AA, 29% H, 4% A, 12% Biracial & 10% O	Measures of Central Tendency	The rate of PTSD among FJD is higher than general population & is much higher than males & those FJD with PTSD have higher levels of distress & lower levels of self-restraint.	PTSD often goes undiagnosed, those with PTSD have greater difficulty managing emotions & impulses, which effects their recidivism.	Further research should explore relationship between trauma, psychopathology, and violence and that the study of trauma may offer a new look at link between the victim & perpetrator.
Chamberlain & Rein	1994	Differences in risk factors and adjustment for male and female delinquents in treatment	Non- experimental & exploratory	88 total adolescents in a treatment foster care program, 12- 18 years old, 51 M & 37 F;	Measures of Central Tendency, Chi Square	Males were younger at first intake & had more total arrests & more felonies; females were	6 months is probably not enough time for female treatment; results support the notion that	Empirical studies should focus on the developmental processes that lead to delinquent

		foster care		no information on race	placed out of the home more often, were four times more likely to have been sexually abused, were more likely to have attempted suicide, & have run away 2 or more times, are arrested more for status offenses, females did better in the start of the program but progressively got worse.	there are sex-specific issues that should be addressed in treatment programs for severely delinquent females; females are difficult to treat, they are at high risk for a variety of future problems.	behavior and conduct problems in females, on family and other factors that contribute, and ultimately on interventions designed specifically for this population.
--	--	-------------	--	------------------------	--	---	---

Davies & Windle	1997	Gender specific pathways between maternal depressive symptoms, family discord, and adolescent adjustment	Non-experimental & descriptive	443 adolescents, from 10-11 grade, living at home with at least their mothers; 97% C	ANOVA, Logarithms, Correlations, Regression Analysis	Family discord is a strong mediator in the development of girls conduct disturbances & a modest mediator of girls' depressive symptoms.	Results demonstrate that childhood risk models, which conclude that boys are more vulnerable to psychosocial stress than girls, cannot simply extend to adolescents with few modifications. Rather girls manifest greater vulnerability to depressive family climates; girls are more effected that boys when there is family discord.	Expand the battery of tests used to include other interpersonal measures.
-----------------	------	--	--------------------------------	--	--	---	--	---

Emerson & Shelton	2001	Using creative arts to build coping skills to reduce domestic violence in the lives of female juvenile offenders	Non-experimental & Descriptive	60 FJD in a juvenile probation department - 58% C, 31% AA, 11% H, NA, A & biracial	Measures of Central Tendency	The authors developed an intervention with FJD based on the demographic characteristics of FJD from a study.	FJD need interventions that target their past abuse, education problems, emotional problems, etc.	Research needs to determine whether this intervention works with FJD.
Esbensen & Piper Deschenes	1999	Differences between gang girls and gang boys	Non-experimental & exploratory	5935 8th grade students 13-15 years old, attending public schools - representing 315 classrooms in 42 schools in 11 US cities - 52% F, 40% C, 27% AA, 19% H	Measures of Central Tendency & t test	There are more girls in gangs than is assumed or than official reports suggest; a greater level of Caucasians participate than previous reports indicate, & there were virtually no gender differences with regard to reasons for joining gangs, activities in which the gang members were involved, and	Provides support for other reports that claim female involvement in violent crime is substantial.	Research should include females when studying gangs & violence in general; to identify & design gang & violence prevention programs that include girls in the target population.

						organizational aspects of the gangs.		
Fejes-Mendoza & Miller	1995	Portraits of dysfunction: Criminal, educational, and family profiles of juvenile female offenders	Non-experimental & exploratory	70 female juvenile delinquents (FJD), 14-17 years old, located in the only correctional facility in each state for females - Iowa & Montana sample - 67% Caucasian (C), 10% Hispanic (H), 13% Native American (NA) 10% African American (AA); Arizona sample - 60% C, 23% H, 10% NA &	Measures of Central Tendency	Repeat offenders have a history of abuse/neglect at home, substance abuse, negative peers, and are leaders in their crimes	The following tools are needed: treatment models, educational assessments, & effective cognitive training.	Gender sensitive measures of competence, studies that look at delinquent vs. non-delinquent behaviors, & more gendered correctional programs.

				7% AA				
Goldstein, Arnold, Weil, Mesiarik, Peuschold, Grisso & Osman	2003	Comorbid symptom patterns in female juvenile offenders	Non- experimental & Descriptive	422 FJ; 12-18 years old; 58.2% C, 18.5% H, 15.1% AA; 2.5% A; 5.6% O	Correlations	63% were depressed, 56.3% were anxious; 47.3% had overall internalizing problems in the clinical range; 71.1% had externalizing symptoms in the t-score range; 50% reported clinical levels of delinquent predispositions; 71.7% had clinical levels of substance use problems; 60.4% had family discord; 36.2% had suicidal ideations; 44% reported at least one rape; 52% reported witnessing a	Externalizing symptoms were significant predictors of substance use but internalizing symptoms were not; depression & delinquent predisposition each were independent predictors of substance use; external symptoms & delinquency predicted family problems; depressed girls in the juvenile justice system should be screened for substance use, family discord,	A multifaceted treatment approach is crucial due to the high rates of symptom comorbidity in this population.



						killings.	& suicidal ideation.	
Hipwell, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber; Keenan; White, & Kroneman	2002	Characteristics of girls with early onset disruptive & antisocial behavior	Non-experimental & exploratory	2451 girls, 5-8 years old; 52.4% AA, 40.8% C, 6.8% mixed or O	Measures of Central Tendency & Chi Square	It is the first wave of data, so not too much can be drawn - however, the frequency of behavior problems remains similar in this age range, the teachers reported more inattentive problems, the 8 year olds had more antisocial behavior, and there was no interaction between neighborhood & age - but five years olds were less likely to have started school.	There are children with significant difficulties at an early age who may benefit from clinical intervention.	Further research will be done with this cohort to see how they develop with age on these same variables.

Joe & Chesney-Lind	1995	"Just every mother's angel" An analysis of gender and ethnic variations in youth gang membership	Non-experimental & exploratory	35 M & 13 F gang members in the community; M were 60% Filipino & 23% Samoan, mean age of 16.7 years old; F were 61% Samoan & 25% Filipino, mean age of 15.3 years old	None indicated	The gang provides a social outlet; girls spread rumors, gang serves as an alternative family; girls have problems at home, high instances of violence within these ethnic minority families; girls seek protection from family & neighborhood.	Results stress the need to explore gangs in their social context and to avoid totalizing notions of either boys' or girls' gangs; the gang molds itself to the needs of the members & dynamics of the community; gang life for girls reflects their attempts to cope with a bleak present & dismal future. These youth need to stop being blamed for their situation.	Research must continue to build an understanding of gangs that is sensitive to the contexts within which they arise.
--------------------	------	--	--------------------------------	---	----------------	--	---	--

Kakar, Friedemann & Peck	2002	Girls in detention: The results of focus group discussion interviews and official records review	Non- experimental & exploratory	official records - 100 cases of 12-18 year olds housed in a detention facility; focus groups of 30 FJD- 26 C, 66 AA & 8 H	Measures of Central Tendency & Chi Square	Childhood maltreatment, parental incarceration, & school behavior problems were risk factors for FJD & most FJD were victims of sexual & physical abuse, families used drugs & violence, & FJD did the same but at younger ages.	Treatment of FJD needs to provide gender specific programming that includes the family issues.	Research needs to develop more effective intervention and prevention programs for girls and the family environment needs to be addressed in their treatment.
--------------------------------	------	---	--	--	--	--	---	---

Kataoka, Zima, Dupre, Moreno, Yang & McCracken	2001	Mental health problems and service use among female juvenile offenders: Their relationship to criminal history	Non-experimental & Descriptive	54 FJD in a correctional facility, mean age of 16.1 years - 6% C, 48% AA, 2% A, 37% H, 7% biracial	Bivariate Analyses	80% had symptoms of an emotional disorder or substance abuse problem, 63% had a history of recidivism. Of those with emotional disorders or Substance Abuse 51% had received mental health services, 58% had special education in lifetime. Among recidivistic youth, 82% had a history of substance abuse & 47% had specialty mental health services in lifetime.	A substantial proportion of FJD merit a mental health evaluation. Interventions for FJD should include a substance abuse assessment because of the association of recidivism & substance use problem in this population.	With this population, use larger, representative samples as well as standardized measures of diagnoses & impairment to determine more accurately the need for mental health services. Future studies should examine the effectiveness of mental health interventions for detained youth and should include a sufficient number of FJD to explore gender differences in policy-relevant outcomes such as recidivism.
--	------	--	--------------------------------	--	--------------------	--	--	---

Kempf-Leonard & Sample	2000	Disparity based on sex: Is gender-specific treatment warranted	Non-experimental & explanatory	128,802 cases of juvenile offenders & survey data from professionals working with FJD & the court system. Stats for juvenile offenders - 69% C, 31% minority, 43.3% between 15&16 years old	Logistic Regression	Initially when cases are referred to court, the cases are gendered & girls were placed out of home more often than males & males who were placed had committed more violent offenses & more alternatives to incarceration need to be provided to FJD.	Placements & courts need to provide FJD the following things: treatment for abuse, love from others, respect, work, physical challenges, psychological health, emotional safety, sex education, stress management, & career counseling.	Research should identify elements of good treatment programs for FJD & resources need to be allocated to FJD programming & research needs to look into policies that effectively intervene with FJD.
------------------------	------	---	--------------------------------	---	---------------------	---	---	--

Kerpelman & Smith	1999	Adjudicated adolescent girls & their mothers	Non-experimental & Descriptive	25 mother & daughter pairs, Mothers are 32-44 years old; daughters are 11-16 years old, youth have been adjudicated to probation and are currently living at home with their mother - 19 Caucasian, 5 African American, 1 Asian	Measures of Central Tendency	Daughters desire autonomy; most families had ineffective problem solving skills; & most daughters had problems in relationship with mom.	Interventions with females should include: empowering mom to parent daughter & empower daughter to have positive identity beliefs.	Research to clarify group differences according to daughter adjudication & mom-daughter relationship & to allow for the development of interventions with families of female juvenile delinquents.
-------------------	------	--	--------------------------------	---	------------------------------	--	--	--

Soo Kim, Fendrich & Wislar	2000	The validity of juvenile arrestees' drug use reporting: A gender comparison	Non-experimental & Descriptive	15,237 total residents in a detention facility, 10-17 years old - 20.9% FJD - 31.6% AA, 27.8% H, 40.5% C, 1% O	Regression Analysis, Multivariate Analysis	Girls were more willing to disclose past month & lifetime marijuana use, Hispanic girls under-reported cocaine use than did Hispanic boys, & girls from one parent households were more likely to disclose recent cocaine usage.	Findings are similar to previous studies and a sample that is not convenience/heterogeneous may yield different results.	Research should explore how differences in reporting propensities among different demographic groups influence findings with regard to family structure, gender and problem behaviors; ways to elicit valid reporting will help research.
McKnight & Loper	2002	The effect of risk and resilience factors on the prediction of delinquency in adolescent girls	Non-experimental & exploratory	2245 FJ in grades 7-12, 10-19 years old; 40% minorities	Regression Analysis, Multivariate Analysis	Risk factors were significantly associated with delinquency; sexual abuse & single parent status were the only significant factors from initial list of six risk factors; inclusion of	The prediction of delinquency in FJ is improved by including resilience variables representing personal choices or behaviors to prediction based on	Studies that investigate the influence of risk & resilience factors, concurrently & longitudinally, hold greater promise for understanding the causality of FJD. Additional studies should

						resiliency factors significantly improved prediction of delinquency; abstaining from alcohol; perceiving teachers are fair, feeling loved, parental belief of trust, & religious beliefs were significant resiliency factors.	demographic & historical risk factors; sexual abuse & single parent status were only significant risk factors; intervention programs should include education components, self-esteem work, discourage substance abuse, work with parents, & promote religious involvement.	examine the contribution of risk & resiliency factors on types of crimes committed, status vs. non-status; future research is needed to understand the unique contributions of females in the FJD population.
Miller	1994	Exploring gender differences in suicidal behavior among adolescent offenders: Findings &	Non-experimental & exploratory	39 M & 45 FJD housed in a juvenile correctional facility; 71% C, 29% NA, mean age of 16 years old	Chi Square	There were significant gender differences in the incidence & prevalence of suicidal behavior among	The most frequent reason for suicidal ideation for males and females was hopelessness, interventions are needed	Do a similar study in a variety of geographic areas, with multiethnic subjects, include observational data along with the self-report.



		implications				adolescent offenders. More females than males reported thinking & attempting suicide, these women find suicide as a solution.	with FJD, interventions with FJD need to focus on developing coping skills, goal setting, self-esteem, & self-determination.	
Molidor	1996	Female gang members: a profile of aggression & victimization	Non-experimental & exploratory	15 incarcerated (FJD), 13-17 years old, located in a Residential Treatment Center (RTC) - 6 C, 5 H, 3 AA & 1 NA	Measures of Central Tendency	FJD suffer from a lack of education, poverty, substance abuse, & gang violence. Their reasons to join a gang were to belong to a family & for power.	School based programs should be developed to encourage affiliation to pro-social organizations as an alternative to gang life.	Themes of gang membership need to be studied on a larger scale.

Pugh-Lilly, Neville, & Poulin	2001	In protection of ourselves: Black girls' perceptions of self-reported delinquent behaviors	Non-experimental & exploratory	11 AA girls; 14-19 years old in an alternative school	Dimensional Analysis	All 11 girls engaged in some form of physical aggression within one year; there are two themes of aggression to: defend oneself/self-protection or self-interest.	Direct aggression was viewed as a necessary survival skill; they felt the institutions designed to help them had let them down & not helped them.	To explore black girl's concerns about personal safety on school grounds & the effectiveness of school personnel in addressing student concerns, especially around safety issues; research to examine potential biases in school discipline practices by developing protocols and increase equity & safety in schools.
Sanger, Creswell, Schaffart, Engelbert & Opfer	2000	Understanding the meanings of female delinquents' communication behaviors	Non-experimental & Descriptive	19 FJD in a correctional facility, 14-18 years old- 17 C, 2 O	Qualitative analysis using Moustakas modification of van Kaam's method & triangulation	The majority of FJD described aspects of communication in a positive & knowledgeable manner/ some of the youth communicated in an	Many of these youth understand how to communicate, however they do not understand how to communicate	Treatment with FJD should: use early detection & assessment of language & communication problems; communication issues should be included when

						inappropriate manner.	within social norms and that the troubled background of these girls has influenced their communication styles.	developing programs for youth; approaches with FJD should be collaborative; FJD need problem solving skills; educators should help youth understand how - communication influences learning, social development, & vocational success; FJD need resiliency building experiences to help self-image.
--	--	--	--	--	--	-----------------------	--	---

Shulmire	1996	A comparative study of gang-involved and other adolescent women	Non-experimental & Descriptive	FJD; FJ at risk for becoming delinquent; FJ with no gang problems, 13-18 years old	ANOVA	Risk factors for FJ to be in gangs include: mother has less than a high school diploma; FJ has a poor relationship with her father or he is absent; FJ feels mistreated at home; FJ lacks sense of efficacy & has a low self esteem; & has friends who are gang involved.	Parent-daughter relationships should be considered when program & interventions are developed; parents need help to be parents; FJ need permission & support to remain a FJ so they can pursue their education & other social activities appropriate for FJs.	Agencies should use the <i>Gang Risk Index</i> developed by this study to assess the youth & provide specific programming & interventions for youth at risk for gang behaviors; new research should increase awareness of those involved to the needs of FJD; FJ want to tell their story.
----------	------	---	--------------------------------	--	-------	---	---	--

Walker-Barnes & Mason	2001	Perceptions of risk factors for female gang involvement among African American and Hispanic women	Non-experimental & Descriptive	31 students, 12-17 years old, attending an alternative school - 26 AA, 2 Jamaican American, 3 H	ANOVA & t tests	Peer pressure was believed to be the largest influence on female gang involvement, girls turn to gangs because of neighborhood crime, abuse from family & protection from other gangs.	Gang membership is an indicator of the importance of peer groups in adolescence, peer pressure is strong, gangs are exciting, & a refuge from abuse.	Future research needs a larger sample size, information is based on self-report, so official data should be incorporated; examine the relationship between factors and female gang involvement, intervention & prevention programs need to be developed.
-----------------------	------	---	--------------------------------	---	-----------------	--	--	--

Wallace Goddard, Goff & Melancon	2000	Profiles of delinquency: A comparison of delinquent behavioral groups	Non- experimental & Descriptive	1583 male & female Junior & Senior High School students attending public school - 48% female, 75% AA, 24% C, 1% Other (O)	Cluster Analysis, ANOVAs, t test	Troubled students tended to be younger, black, females in the 8th grade. Marginal delinquents tended to be white, 9th grade females. General delinquents tended to be black males. Petty thieves were white males in 9th grade. Violent extortionist were older black males. Extreme delinquents were males who were very active in gangs.	Female delinquents may act out different behaviors for different reasons (theories) than males. Each group is distinct in demographics, family socialization, personality indicators & behavior outcomes.	Research should explore broader samples that represent total population including drop- outs & incarcerated youth. Other areas of research include twins, adoption, a wider array of delinquent activities, as well as the culture and programs in schools that may reduce delinquent behavior.
Walrath, Ybarra, Holden, Manteuffel,	2002	Female offenders referred for community-	Non- experimental & descriptive	2220 youth participating in a community	Multinomial Logistic Regression, Descriptive	Girls with a conviction history are not exclusively	This information could be used in prevention	Include investigation into the predictive ability of these

Santiago & Leaf		based mental health services as compared to other service-referred youth: Correlates of conviction	mental health program, 5-17.5 years old; 65.6% M & C; 11% AA, 13.6% h; 9.9% O	Analysis, Correlations	referred into services from the juvenile justice system; the more life challenges reported by youth the greater the odds of youth convictions.	efforts with FJ; with more FJ convictions & not many RTCs community based providers are going to need treatment services; FJD need individual treatment based on own needs, not male needs; resources need to be targeted to FJD, treatment goals defined, intervention initiated for FJD.	life challenges with regard to recidivism, mental health symptomatology & life functioning; understanding the relationship of the challenge to the nature of offense & level of involvement with juvenile justice system to meet mental health & juvenile justice needs; protective factors should be explored for strength-based plans & interventions; need to find effective interventions with FJD.
-----------------	--	--	---	------------------------	--	--	---

Wang	2000	Female gang affiliation: Knowledge and perceptions of at-risk girls	Non-experimental & exploratory	216 middle school students, 10-14 years old in summer programs for urban youth - 40% AA, 38% H; 13% C, 9% A	Measures of Central Tendency	Sexual or physical abuse are not important factors for a female to join a gang; sex partners and auxiliary members are still the major roles for female gang members to play in a gang.	Remedial strategies, parent education, extracurricular activities, after school programs, quality of schooling, and job opportunities need to be increased to reduce the number of females attracted to gangs.	Research should include information on middle & high school girls, include information about SES, identify co-ed or same sex gang membership in future studies to see if differences exist in reasons to join the gang.
------	------	---	--------------------------------	---	------------------------------	---	--	---



APPENDIX B

FACTORS INFLUENCING FEMALE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

- Neighborhood/Community
- Poverty
  - Peer pressure
  - Drugs & alcohol
  - Gangs
  - Violence
  - Physical & sexual

- Health Issues
- Pregnancy
  - Sexually Transmitted Diseases
  - Nutrition

- Gangs
- Sense of Belonging
  - Rape
  - Violence
  - Substance

- Family
- Low levels of intimacy
  - Marital discord
  - Child abuse
  - Domestic violence
  - Broken homes
  - Communication problems
  - Substance abuse & dependence
  - Involvement in criminal justice system

# Female Juvenile Delinquent

- Education
- Academic failure
  - Special education needs
  - Suspensions
  - Expulsions
  - Peer pressure
  - Lack of assistance from school personnel

- Mental Health
- Self-esteem
  - Self-worth
  - Suicidal ideation
  - Self-mutilation
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Anger
  - Clinical levels of substance abuse

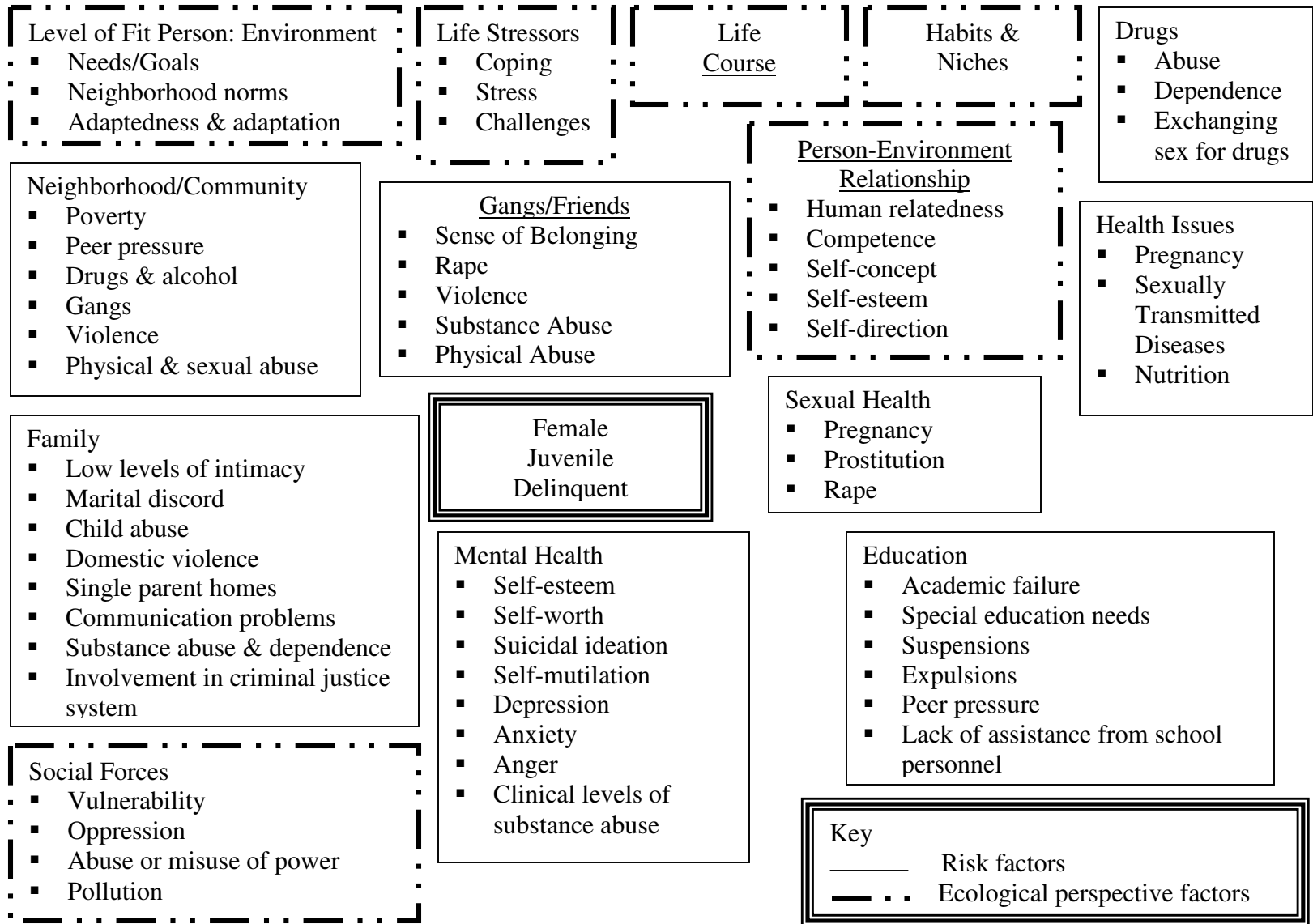
- Sexual Health
- Pregnancy
  - Prostitution
  - Rape

- Drugs
- Abuse
  - Dependence
  - Exchanging sex for drugs

Key  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Risk factors

## APPENDIX C

### CONCEPTUAL MAP OF ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE



APPENDIX D

MINOR ASSENT FORM

## MINOR ASSENT FORM

Hello! My name is Lynn Tankersley and I am a student at the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work. This assent form may contain words that are new to you. If you read or hear any words that you don't know, please ask the person who gave you this form to explain them to you.

I am doing a study to learn more about the lives of young women who are staying here at the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC). I am going to talk to 25 or 30 females currently staying here at JDC. I am interested in learning about your life and your experiences. What you help me learn may help counselors, probation officers, and social workers to learn what they need to know about juvenile delinquency and may help keep young people from getting into trouble.

I am asking you to participate in this study. To be in the study, you have to be between 10 and 17 years old, staying at JDC, and currently facing at least one petition of delinquency or violation of your probation. If you agree to talk to me, I will ask you to answer some questions about your age, race, reason for being here, your experiences, and what you think people should know about helping other kids. The interview will take about an hour and a half to two hours, it will be audio taped and I will take notes. Participation is voluntary, which means that if you want to stop the interview, you can without any consequences. At the end, I will listen to the audiotape, and write down what we talk about, and then I will destroy the audiotape.

There are no known risks if you participate in this study as far as I know, and by participating in this study, you will be at no more of a risk than the risk in your current environment. However, our conversation may bring back memories that are difficult. Again, at any time in the interview if you want to stop, you can. Also, if you would like, after the interview, I will refer you to a counselor if you want to talk about your feelings. Also, an advocate for you is available during our interview if you want.

I will keep all of my notes in a locked file cabinet. Only my UTA sponsor and I will have access to the files. All information that you give to me is **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL** and will **NOT** be shared. However, I am required by law to report to the appropriate authorities, suspicion of harm to yourself, to children, or to others; if you are at risk of harm; or if you know of a child or children at risk to harm.

If you are willing to participate, please sign this permission slip. Thank you for your cooperation.

### STANDARD CLAUSES

1. I understand that informed consent is required of all persons in this project.
2. The general ideas about this study have been told to me in a language that I can understand.



APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET



## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET

Code# \_\_\_\_\_

How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

What ethnicity/race are you? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you here in the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center right now?

---

---

---

Is this your first time to be at the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center? \_\_\_\_\_

What day did you come to Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center? \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX F

YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE

## YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE

### Ice Breaker

The best way for me to understand what it is like to be locked up as a teenager is to talk to the girls themselves because you all are the experts on the subject.

- If you were going to describe yourself to someone who you didn't know very well, how would you describe yourself?

### Family

- Who do you live with? Describe your relationship with your parent(s)/guardian and other family members.
- Describe a typical day at your house.
- What things do you do with your family?
- What do you think your family thinks about you being in JDC?

### Friends, Relationships & Leisure Time

- What kinds of people do you usually hang out with? Describe the places you usually go together.
- Describe a typical day with you and your friends.
- Describe your last relationship with someone you dated, either in the past or right now.
- What do you think your friends think about you being in JDC?

### Education

- What is school like for you?
- What do you like the most about school & why? What do you like the least about school & why?
- What do you think your teachers and the school think about you being in JDC?

### Delinquency

- Describe what it is like for you being here at JDC and away from home.
- Describe your thoughts when you first came to JDC.
- Tell me about what you think has gotten you here to JDC this time.

### Substance Abuse History

- Describe your knowledge about drugs and alcohol use.
- Describe your use of drugs or alcohol.

### Mental Health & Emotional Needs

- Describe how you generally feel on a typical day in the free.
- Describe how you deal with tough or stressful situations.

### Community & Environment

- Describe the area where you live.
- What do you like best about living there?
- What do you like least about living there?

### Ending

- Out of all of the different things that we have talked about today, what do you think has had the greatest impact on you being here at JDC?
- Once you get back to the community, what types of programs or services do you feel would help you be successful in the community?
- When we first started this interview, you said if you were going to describe yourself to someone who you didn't know very well, you would say that you were ... Would you say the same thing now?
- If you could change one thing about your life what would it be and why?
- What has this interview been like for you?
- Are there any other factors in your life that we have not yet discussed that you feel have influenced your referral to the Dallas County Juvenile Department? If yes, please describe these factors.

Sometimes when you talk about your past abuse, emotional problems, and/or substance use, it brings up unpleasant thoughts and feelings. Are you having any of those thoughts and feelings now? Would you like to talk to anyone further about the questions you have answered?

APPENDIX G

PROBATION OFFICER QUESTIONNAIRE

## PROBATION OFFICERS QUESTIONNAIRE

### Family

- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding the relationships between these young ladies and their parent(s)/guardian and other family members.

### Friends, Relationships & Leisure Time

- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding the kinds of people these young women usually hang out with?
- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding the relationships these young women have with the people they date.

### Education

- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding what school is like for these young women?
- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding what the teachers and the schools think about these young women being in JDC or on probation?

### Delinquency

- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding what it is like for these young women to be at JDC and away from home.
- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding what they thought when they first went to JDC.
- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding what they think has gotten them referred to JDC.

### Substance Abuse History

- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding what these young women know about drugs and alcohol.
- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding their use of drugs or alcohol.

### Mental Health & Emotional Needs

- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding how these young women generally feel on a typical day in the free.
- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding how they deal with tough or stressful situations.

### Community & Environment

- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding the areas where they live.
- Out of all of the different things that we have talked about today, describe your perceptions regarding what these young women think has had the greatest impact on them being at JDC?

- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding what types of programs or services in the community can help these young women to be successful?
- Describe your perceptions and experiences regarding the one thing that these young women would change about their lives and why?
- Are there any other factors in their life that we have not yet discussed that you feel have influenced their referrals to the Dallas County Juvenile Department? If yes, please describe these factors.

## REFERENCES

- Acoca, L. (1998). Outside/inside: The violation of American girls at home, on the streets, and in the juvenile justice system. *Crime and Delinquency*, 44 (4), 561-589. Retrieved October 30, 2002 from ProQuest database.
- Acoca, L. (1999). *Investing in girls: A 21<sup>st</sup> century strategy*. Juvenile Justice Journal VI (1), Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Acoca, L. (2000). *Educate or incarcerate: Girls in the Florida and Duval County Juvenile Justice Systems*. San Francisco, CA: National Council on Crime and Delinquency.
- Agnew, R. (2001). Building on the foundation of general strain theory: Specifying the types of strain most likely to lead to crime and delinquency. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 38(4), 319-361.
- Akers, R. (1997). *Criminological theories: Introduction and evaluation*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.
- Allen-Meares, P. (1995). *Social work with children and adolescents*. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman Publishers.



- American Bar Association & National Bar Association. (2001). *Justice by gender: The lack of appropriate prevention, diversion and treatment alternatives for girls in the justice system*. Washington, DC: American Bar Association. Retrieved October 14, 2002, from Academic Search Premier database.
- Archwamety, T. & Katsiyannis, A. (1998). Factors related to recidivism among delinquent females at a state correctional facility. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 7(1)*, 59-67.
- Bachman, R. & Peralta, R. (2002). The relationship between drinking and violence in an adolescent population: Does gender matter? *Deviant Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 23*, 1-19.
- Beccaria, C. (1963). *On crimes and punishments*. (H. Paolucci, Trans). Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc. In Jacoby, J.E. (Ed.) (1994). *Classics of criminology*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Becker, H.S. (1963). *Outsiders*. London: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. In Jacoby, J.E. (Ed.) (1994). *Classics of criminology*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Belknap, J., & Holsinger, K. (1997). Understanding incarcerated girls: The results of a focus group study. *Prison Journal, 77(4)*, 381-405. Retrieved October 24, 2002, from Academic Search Premier database.

- Bloom, B., Owen, B., Deschenes, E. P., Rosenbaum, J. (2002). Moving toward justice for female juvenile offenders in the new millennium: Modeling gender-specific policies and programs. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 18 (1)*, 37-56. Retrieved February 2, 2003 from ProQuest database.
- Bodinger-Deuriarte, C. (2001). Female adolescents: What prevention programs need to know (Update 9). The Northwest Report, September. Abstract retrieved October 14, 2002 from EBSCOhost database.
- Bogdan, R. & Taylor, S.J. (1975). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A phenomenological approach to the social sciences*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Bownes, D. & Albert, R. L. (1996). *State challenge activities*. September 1996 Bulletin. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Brotherton, D. C. (1996). "Smartness," "toughness," and "autonomy": Drug use in the context of gang female delinquency. *Journal of Drug Issues, 26(1)*, 261-278. Retrieved December 13, 2003 from EBSCOhost database.
- Budnick, K. J. & Shields-Fletcher, E. (1998). *What about girls?* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Campbell, A. (1981). *Girl delinquents*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- Cauffman, E., Feldman, S. S., Waterman, J., Steiner, H. (1998). Posttraumatic stress disorder among female juvenile offenders. *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 37 (11), 1209-1216.
- Chamberlain, P. & Reid, J.B. (1994). Differences in risk factors and adjustment for male and female delinquents in treatment foster care. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, (3), 23-39.
- Chesney-Lind, M. (1989). Girls' crime and woman's place: Toward a feminist model of female delinquency. *Crime and Delinquency* 35, 5-29.
- Chesney-Lind, M. & Shelden, R.G. (1998). *Girls, delinquency, and juvenile justice*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: West/Wadsworth.
- Child Welfare League of America. (2002). Summary of juvenile justice provisions in 21<sup>st</sup> century department of justice appropriations act (P.L. 107-273). Retrieved December 19, 2002 from [www.cwla.org/advocacy/jjpnjja.htm](http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/jjpnjja.htm)
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Daly, K. and Chesney-Lind, M. 1988. "Feminism and Criminology." *Justice Quarterly* 5: 497-538.
- Davies, P. T. & Windle, M. (1997). Gender-specific pathways between maternal depressive symptoms, family discord, and adolescent adjustment. *Developmental Psychology*, 33(4), 657-668.

- Davignon, D. D. (2002, January 28). *ACDI-Corrections version II: Violent juvenile offender assessment*. Retrieved November 6, 2003 from [http://www.bdsltd.com/bds ACDI CV II Research Article A.htm](http://www.bdsltd.com/bds_ACDI_CV_II_Research_Article_A.htm).
- Dembo, R., Williams, L. & Schmeidler, J. (1993). Gender differences in the mental health service needs among youth entering a juvenile detention center. *Journal of Prison & Jail Health, (12)*, 73-101.
- Durkheim, E. (1938). *The normal and the pathological*. Reprinted from Durkheim, E. *Rules of the sociological method*. (S.A. Solovay & J.H. Mueller, trans.) (G.E.G. Catlin, Ed.). London: Macmillan Publishing, Co., Inc. In Jacoby, J.E. (Ed.) (1994). *Classics of criminology*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Ehrenberg, M. F. & Cox, D. N. (1990). The million adolescent personality inventory profiles of depressed adolescents. *Adolescence, 25(98)*, 415-425. Retrieved March 13, 2004 from EBSCOhost database.
- Emerson, E. & Shelton, D. (2001). Using creative arts to build coping skills to reduce domestic violence in the lives of female juvenile offenders. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 22*, 181-195.
- Equal Access to Facilities, Services and Treatment Act (2001). Austin, TX. Abstract retrieved September 5, 2002 from [www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org)

- Ereth, J. & Gramling, S. (2003, January). *Cook County's girls link gender-responsive program self-assessment*. (National Council on Crime and Delinquency Report). Abstract retrieved November 17, 2003 from <http://www.state.me.us/corrections/ajfo/images/GirlsLink/GL%20-%20PROGRAM%20SELF-ASSESSMENT%20TOOL%20-%20FINAL%20DRAFT.pdf>
- Esbensen, F., Deschenes, P. E. & Winfree, L. T. (1999). Differences between gang girls and gang boys. *Youth & Society, 31*, 27-54. Retrieved October 24, 2002, from Academic Search Premier database.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2002). *Crime in the United States 2001*. (2002). Washington, DC: FBI, U.S. Department of Justice.
- Fejes-Mendoza, K. & Miller, D. (1995). Portraits of dysfunction: Criminal, educational and family profiles of juvenile female delinquents. *Education & Treatment of Children, 18 (3)*, 309-322. Retrieved October 30, 2002, from EBSCOhost database.
- Frykman, J. & Gilje, N. (Eds.) (2003). *Being there: New perspectives on phenomenology and the analysis of culture*. Lund, Sweden: Nordic Academic Press.
- Funk, S. J., (1999). Risk assessment for juveniles on probation: A focus on gender. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 26(1)*, 44-68.

- Gavazzi, S. M., Slade, D., Buettner, C. K., Partridge, C., Yarcheck, C. M., & Andrews D. W. (n.d.). *Toward the conceptual development and empirical measurement of global risk indicators in the lives of court-involved youth*. Retrieved 11/22/2003 from <http://projectgrad.osu.edu/pdf/grad-for-psych-reports.pdf>.
- Germain, C. B. & Gitterman, A. (1996). *The life model of social work practice: Advances in theory & practice*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Goldstein, M. E., Arnold, D. H., Weil, J., Mesiarik, C. M., Peuschold, D., Grisson, T., & Osman, D. (2003). Comorbid symptom patterns in female juvenile offenders. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 26, 565-582. Retrieved February 1, 2004 from Science Direct database.
- Heilbrun, K., Cottle, C., and Lee, R. (2000). Risk assessment for adolescents. *Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet*. Charlottesville, VA: Institute of Law, Psychiatry, & Public Policy, University of Virginia. Retrieved November 6, 2003 from [http://www.ilppp.virginia.edu/Juvenile Forensic Fact Sheets/Fact Sheets/Risk.html](http://www.ilppp.virginia.edu/Juvenile_Forensic_Fact_Sheets/Fact_Sheets/Risk.html).
- Hipwell, A. E., Loeber, R., Stouthamer-Loeber, M., Keenan, K., White, H. R., & Kroneman, L. (2002). Characteristics of girls with early onset disruptive and antisocial behaviour. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 12(1), 99-118. Retrieved February 1, 2004 from Criminal Justice Periodicals.

- Hirschi, T. (1969). *A control theory of delinquency*. in Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of delinquency*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press. In Jacoby, J.E. (Ed.) (1994). *Classics of criminology*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Jacoby, J.E. (Ed.) (1994). *Classics of criminology*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Jensen, G. F. & Rojek, D. G. (1998). *Delinquency and youth crime* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Joe, K. A., & Chesney-Lind, M. (1995). Just every mother's angel: An analysis of gender and ethnic variations in youth gang membership. *Gender and Society*, 9, 408-431.
- Johnson, S. J. (1998). Girls are in trouble. *Corrections Today*, 60(7), 136-141. Retrieved March 29, 2003 from EBSCOhost database.
- Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act (1974). Washington, D.C. Abstract retrieved September 5, 2002 from [www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org).
- Kakar, S., Friedemann, M. L. & Peck, L. (2002). Girls in detention: The results of focus group discussion interviews and official records review. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 18 (1), 57-73. Retrieved February 2, 2003, from ProQuest database.
- Karlsson, G. (1993). Psychological qualitative research from a phenomenological perspective. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

- Kataoka, S. H., Zima, B. T., Dupre, D. A., Moreno, K. A., Yang, X., & McCracken, J. T. (2001). Mental health problems and service use among female juvenile offenders: Their relationship to criminal history. *Journal of American Academy of Adolescent Psychiatry, 40*(5), 549-555.
- Kempf-Leonard, K. & Sample, L. L. (2000). Disparity based on sex: Is gender-specific treatment warranted? *Justice Quarterly, 17* (1), 89-128. Retrieved September 30, 2003 from Criminal Justice Periodicals.
- Kerpelman, J. L. & Smith, S. L. (1999). Adjudicated adolescent girls and their mothers: Examining identity. *Youth & Society, 30* (3), 313-348. Retrieved October 30, 2002, from EBSCOhost database.
- Kim, J. Y. S., Fendrich, M. & Wislar, J. S. (2000). The validity of juvenile arrestees' drug use reporting: A gender comparison. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 37* (4), 419-432.
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lipsey, M. W. (1992). *Juvenile delinquency treatment; A meta-analytic inquiry into the variability of effects*. In T.A. Cook, H. Cooper, D.S. Cordray, H. Hartmann, L.V. Hedges, R.J. Light, T.A. Louis and E. Mosleller (Eds.) *Meta-analysis for explanation: A casebook*, pp. 83-126. New York: Russell Sage.
- MacDonald, J. M. & Chesney-Lind, M. (2001). Gender bias and juvenile justice revisited: A multiyear analysis. *Crime and Delinquency, 47* (2), 173-195. Retrieved February 2, 2003, from ProQuest database.



- Maniglia, R. (1997). *Juvenile female offenders: A status of the states report*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Maynard, R.A. & Garry, E.M. (1997). *Adolescent motherhood: Implications for the juvenile justice system*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Mazerolle, P. (1998). Gender, general strain, and delinquency: An empirical examination. *Justice Quarterly*, 15(1), 65-91.
- McKnight, L. R. & Loper, A. B. (2002). The effect of risk and resilience factors on the prediction of delinquency in adolescent girls. *School Psychology International*, 23(2), 186-198.
- Miller, D. (1994). Exploring gender differences in suicidal behavior among adolescent offenders: Findings and implications. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 45(3), 134-138.
- Molidor, C.E. (1996). Female gang members: A profile of aggression and victimization. *Social Work*, 41(3), 251-258. Retrieved October 30, 2002, from EBSCOhost database.
- Monette, D.R., Sullivan, T.J., & DeJong, C.R. (2002). Applied social research: Tool for the human services (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers.
- National Association of Social Workers (1999). *Code of ethics*. Retrieved April 8, 2006 from <http://www.naswdc.org/pubs/code/code.asp>.

National Council on Crime and Delinquency. (June 1999). *Cook county's structured decision making model for girls in the juvenile justice system*. Retrieved November 17, 2003 from <http://www.state.me.us/corrections/ajfo/images/GirlsLink/GL%20-%20SDM%20TRAINING%20MANUAL2.pdf>.

Obeidallah, D.A. and Earls, F.J. (1999). *Adolescent girls: The role of depression in the development of delinquency*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (2003). *Girls study group: Program announcement*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Offord, D.R., Boyle, M.C., & Racine, Y.A. (1991). The epidemiology of antisocial behavior in childhood and adolescence. In D.J. Pepler & K. H. Rubin (Eds.), *The development and treatment of childhood aggression* (p. 31-54). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates.

Poe-Yamagata, E. & Butts, J.A. (1996). *Female offenders in the juvenile justice system: Statistics summary*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Pollard, R. & Pollard, C. (2001). Troubled voices: A qualitative inquiry. *Education*, 121 (3), 476-485.

- Pugh-Lilly, A. O., Neville, H. A., & Poulin, K. L. (2001). In protection of ourselves: Black girls' perceptions of self-reported delinquent behaviors. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 25, 145-154.
- Rozen, M. (2002). Girls in trouble: Rising arrest rates threaten to overwhelm Texas facilities for juveniles. *Texas Lawyer*. Retrieved January 3, 2005 from <http://www.law.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/View&c=LawArticle&cid=1030821154668&live=true&cst=1&pc=0&pa=0>.
- Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2001). *Research methods for social work*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Sanger, D., Creswell, J., Schaffart, B., Engelbert, K., & Opfer, T. (2000). Understanding the meanings of female delinquents' communication behaviors. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 51(3), 300-305.
- Scahill, M.C. (2000). *Female delinquency cases, 1997*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Schwartzstein, R. M. & Steketee, M. W. (1990). Federal juvenile justice policy and the incarceration of girls. *Crime & Delinquency*, 36 (4), 503-521. Retrieved September 12, 2002 from EBSCOhost database.
- Sharkey, J.D., Furlong, M.J., Jimerson, S.R., & O'Brien, K.M. (2003). Evaluating the utility of a risk assessment to predict recidivism among male and female adolescents. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 26 (4), 467-494.

- Shaw, C.R. & McKay, H.D. (1942). *Differential systems of values*. In Shaw, C.R. & McKay, H.D. (1942). *Juvenile delinquency in urban areas*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. In Jacoby, J.E. (Ed.) (1994). *Classics of criminology*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Shelden, R.G. (2004). *Female delinquency and the juvenile justice system. Part I: Delinquency among girls*. Retrieved April 8, 2006 from <http://www.cjcj.org/pdf/girls1.pdf>.
- Shoemaker, D. J. (1996). *Theories of delinquency: An examination of explanations of delinquent behavior* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Shulmire, S. R. (1996). *A comparative study of gang-involved and other adolescent women*. (ERIC document Reproduction Service No. ED412477)
- Sondheimer, D.L. (2001). Young female offenders: Increasingly visible yet poorly understood. *Gender Issues 19 (1)*, 79-90. Retrieved January 10, 2004 from EBSCOhost database.
- Snyder, H.N. (2005). *Juvenile arrests 2003*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- (2003). *Juvenile arrests 2001*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

- Snyder, H.N. & Sickmund, M. (1999). *Juvenile offenders and victims: 1999 National report*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Stahl, A. L. (2003). *Delinquency cases in juvenile courts, 1999*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Stahl, A., Finnegan, T., and Kang, W. (2002). *Easy access to juvenile court statistics: 1990-1999*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Stattin, H. & Magnusson, D. (1996). Antisocial development: A holistic approach. *Developmental Psychopathology*, (8), 617-645.
- Steffensmeier, D. & Allan, E. (1996). Gender and crime: Toward a gendered theory of female offending. *Annual Review Sociological*, 22, 459- 87.
- Sutherland, E.H. (1947). *Differential association*. In Sutherland, E.H. (1947). *Principles of criminology* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). New York: Harper & Row. In Jacoby, J.E. (Ed.) (1994). *Classics of criminology*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Texas Juvenile Probation Commission. (2002). *Female juvenile offenders: Services in Texas*. Austin, TX: Texas Juvenile Probation Commission.

Texas Juvenile Probation Commission. (2005). *Juvenile statistical activity by department*. Austin, TX: Texas Juvenile Probation Commission. Retrieved January 11, 2006 from [http://www.tjpc.state.tx.us/statistics/\\_countystatisticaldata/countystatisticaldata\\_results.asp](http://www.tjpc.state.tx.us/statistics/_countystatisticaldata/countystatisticaldata_results.asp)

United States Census Bureau. (n.d.) Dallas county quick facts. Washington, DC: United States Census Bureau. Retrieved January 14, 2006 from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/48113.html>

Vold, G.B., Bernard, T.J. & Snipes, J.B. (2002). *Theoretical criminology*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Walker-Barnes, C. J. & Mason, C. A. (2001). Perceptions of risk factors for female gang involvement among African American and Hispanic women. *Youth & Society*, 32 (3) 303-336. Retrieved August 3, 2003 from EBSCOhost database.

Wallace Goddard, H., Goff, B. G., & Melancon, M. V. (2000). Profiles of delinquency: A comparison of delinquent behavioral groups. *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality*, 15 (1), 19-51. Retrieved November 2, 2002 from EBSCOhost database.

Walrath, C., Ybarra, Holden, E. W., Manteuffel, B., Santiago, R., & Leaf, P. (2002). Female offenders referred for community-based mental health service as compared to other service-referred youth: Correlates of conviction. *Journal of Adolescence*, 26, 45-61. Retrieved February 1, 2004 from Science Direct database.

Wang, J. Z. (2000). Female gang affiliation: Knowledge and perceptions of at-risk girls. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 44 (5), 618-632.

Wright, K., & Wright, K. (1994). Family life, delinquency and crime: A policymaker's guide. Research Summary. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

V. Lynn Tankersley received her Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Science in Social Work from the University of Texas at Austin and her Doctorate of Philosophy in Social Work from the University of Texas at Arlington. Her professional areas of interest include juvenile delinquency and females in correctional and rehabilitation systems.